

**THE
RE-DISCOVERY
OF
AMERICA**

WALDO FRANK

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The Re-discovery of America



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The Re-discovery of America

An Introduction to a Philosophy of
American Life

BY
WALDO FRANK



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TO HERBERT CROLY

Whose "Promise of American Life" (1909) laid the foundation,
in modern, real terms, for the view of America as a
democratic nation led by an aristocracy
of spirit; and

TO THE EDITORS OF "THE NEW REPUBLIC"

Whose generous hospitality
made possible the writing
of this book.

Underneath all, individuals!

—Whitman.

Any thing that frees the spirit without a corresponding growth in self-mastery is a menace.

—Goethe.

The more things the body has in common with other bodies, the more things will the mind be adapted to perceive.

—Spinoza.

And Moses said unto God: 'Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them: The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me: What is His name? what shall I say unto them?' And God said unto Moses: 'I AM THAT I AM'; and He said: 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me unto you.'

—Torah.

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I

Between Ourselves

BETWEEN OURSELVES

WHEN at last this book was written, I was weary. It was as if I had crossed a continent unblazed, hacking my way. I was athirst for the gentle, the charming, the ripe, which I had done without all the year of my labour. Suddenly came Europe to me—my Europe, whose heart is France; and it was the draught I needed of freshening wine. The mellow farms, the peasants sure as their trees. The luminous Eye, not of France alone but of all the western world—Paris. I saw again that masterwork of modern life—intricate, mouldering, subtle, immense, intimate, generous Paris: fruit of the autumn of all the Mediterranean Summer. I dwelt again in the streets that curve with life, that stratify with thought, that rise with ordered dream: dwelt with my friends in that nerved stone, in the ease of their acceptance, in the nurture of their talk, in the silence between men who for a thousand years have lived within a Word. . . .

Then, America came to my weariness: the America of beauty and of splendour. The shafts of dream, impermanent and electric, that are the buildings of my New York: the haze of blue, sleeping, which is the soul of the City whence these towers arise. The negro South, where with my friend Jean Toomer I had

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lived within the Veil, drinking the warm life that rises and blows with the cane. And the other South, bled white, maimed of limb, palsied of head, the stiff-eyed, loveable childish South of the "masters" which Stark Young (just before it was too late) begins to give us in his novels. . . . New England; the white towns holding their fire beneath the smoke of the elms, the mountain villages whose men and women have learned the resignation of the pine, the wisdom of the rocks they have clung to, that shrewd nobility of New England—Robert Frost's New England and my own—which inheres like the grain of the wood. And the heavy Mississippi lumbering to the Gulf: its open children riding the raft of sentiment down life's river, blowing their vague, varicolored thoughts—the Mid-America I had wandered and learned to own with Sherwood Anderson, Carl Sandburg. And the mountains beyond, the monotone of Rock on which bush and horse and man are a dim furze; where I had ranged and played, and looked to the east and looked to the west, and been beyond them both. . . . All the Americas of my loves and my adventures: which had hardened me, softened me, made me. This America, too, like this Europe, I had had; and, as I wrote this book, had left behind me.

For it may be true: I have written a book without charm, a book almost fleshless and with no smiles or pleasant moods at all. A book so skeletal and simple that you, Reader, may find it a stony way to follow.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Europe I love is not pictured in it; nor the feature, trait and voice of the America I love.

In the quarrelling mood of my fatigue, after the long journey, I question myself about this. Why? Why, since Europe is of this life that I have studied, and since I have known her loveliness, dwelt in her composes, drunk her human wine, is Europe not aglow in my pages? And why, since I see America a spring field of flowers—wild, thorned, gardened—flowers that riot their inharmonious songs under a mystic sky that gathers them together, have I in this book confined myself to the soil and rock beneath?

I have my answer. First, for Europe. . . . To give is as integral of life as to receive. (This is not morality, it is a vital fact.) The American who has really lived in Europe—and this means, who has partaken of its life with Europeans—to save his life must return to his own place. For he will have learned, if the gift of life is in him, learned while he received the life of Europe, that he must *give* to have it; and that, American, he could give only by getting home and by making something home. There, he took: here only he may create what the world, including Europe, can receive. If he does less, he will not have lived in Europe; he will have died there. The nurture and pleasure of what he thinks he has received will have been the euphoria of his death. . . . All Europe feels this organic challenge to ourselves, for Europe's sake, *to create America*: and Europe's masters (that is

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their touchstone, marking the real from the false) bespeak the challenge. I am with Romain Rolland under the pines, above Lac Léman. The mountains of France rise from the still waters like the frozen prayers of men who have died. Rolland is silent: a frail, stooped height he is, with transparent skin and his eyes brighter and more blue than the day. All else, save his eyes, is pale, tremorous, evanescent. He says: "I am a last son of a dying race. We have not been able long to match these trees and these mountains. If the man of the West is again to beget a Responder to what we look on here, he must be mothered by you." He means America; with the candid need of the great he turns to America. I sit with another European—deeply other—among his treasures before his library fire. Anatole France is an old man and soon he will die. But he is gay; from the warm softness of his mood, so plastically there in his beard, in his woolly clothes, in his red cap and slippers, jets through his eyes and words the sparkling vintage of a millennial culture. He is quarrelling with me. "You write of Puritans: how could Puritans beget such women?" In his hand is an American magazine, open at the photographs of girls on a beach. His face gleams with this delight of mental paradox sensuously fleshed: the clear truth rises in it on the warm body of a jest. Suddenly, his face is dark. "We are old—old," he says. "Do not cheat our hope."

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In the return, in the hard, charmless labour of my book, in the creating here, in the forgetting and the denying (if need be) of you, beloved Europe, I respond more truly to what you gave me, than if I had sung your praises. And you understand this. . . .

America too will understand, although perhaps less quickly. My silence about the charms of my country is earnest of her hold. She is no light o' love to be wooed, dallied with, reviled, enjoyed, exploited. The man who struggles to accept her as the flesh of his spirit may be forgiven if, in the creative hour, he forgets to praise her. And if her faults, her vices and her dangers are plastic, then, before him, it is because she has become the body of himself.

PART ONE:
CAUSES AND CONDITIONS

I: THE LAST DAYS OF EUROPE

1

TAKE Europe as an alive organic body. If you look for its "heart," for its "mind," for its "soul"—in another word, if you look for the source of its energy and spirit, you come upon the Sea whose shores were Egypt, Judæa, Athens, Rome. The Mediterranean was the womb of Europe. In this fertile water was formed the universe, the God, the mind, the state, the law, the science and the man of the West. To make an antithesis of the Mediterranean parts is as confusing as to dissociate the organs of a body. How could Hellene and Jew have married as they did in Alexandria, how have begotten the Christian world, if their individualities had not been functions of an organic whole? Where in Saint Paul does Palestine end and Rome begin? The synthesis of the Patrists embraces Semite, Greek, and Berber. The old legend that Aristotle visited Jeremiah is, of course, no fact, but is as true as the fact that Pythagoras and Æschylus were adepts of mysteries that came from Egypt, and that Plato had studied the wisdom of Hermes Trismegistus. The Mediterranean became one spirit, and its body was Europe.

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Consider these general convictions:

1. Man lives in a universe of which his earth is the heart. The universe revolves around him.

2. Man is lord of all creatures. He is an independent creation. Above him are only the gods and God himself.

3. Man's reason is absolutely true; faith can be placed in it. Or—

4. Man's faith is reasonable; is indeed inspired by contact with divinity.

5. Man can know what is good and what is evil.

6. Practice of good makes for life and blessedness, it is wisdom. The contrary practice leads to death and damnation.

7. Reason and faith reveal divinity.

8. Divinity is good and is one, and is concerned in man's well-being.

9. Man's conception of the natural world, while not complete, is fundamentally correct. This is so because (take your choice)—

a. The senses give us reality.

b. Reason corrects the senses, giving us reality.

c. God, wisdom, faith, supplement and correct senses and reason, giving us reality.

10. We know what matter is, even if we cannot create it.

11. We know what thought is, as separate from matter.

12. The law of cause and effect, on which rest logic and science of all kinds, is absolute.

13. Time and Space are real; they are independent of our minds; we are within them, rather than they within us.

14. Human individuality—call it soul, spirit, ego—exists, not relatively, but absolutely in Time and Space.

... Here are blocks that made the House—organs that made the conceptual Body—of Western Europe. Surely they were, and substance, of the experience of

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western man. Of course, there were differences of opinion about one and another. Jew, Ionian, Alexandrian, mediæval schoolman, had variant ways of defining all these laws: some were stressed where others were ignored or bravely denied. But differences were not fundamental, were not racial; were not, in the absurd Spenglerian sense, "cultural" at all. Plato and Aristotle disagreed about substance and God, and both were Greeks. Pharisee and Sadducee fought about virtue and damnation and were yet Jews. One man at Oxford might have concurred with one Roman more wholly than the Roman with his brother. By and large, these laws established the spiritual anatomy of Europe. Within them men lived and died, and created beauty and found truth: men before Isaiah, men after Shakespeare. . . .

Consider these laws in the light of modern thought: you will find that every one of them is gone. They were the foundation blocks of our House; they have vanished. We cannot dwell on the process of their disappearance; for that process is largely the history of modern times. Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler wrecked our comfortable cosmos. Lamarck, Goethe, Darwin worked at our biological dethronement. The sure structure of our faith and reason, wherein resided our certainties of the true, the beautiful, and the good, had been already challenged by the smothered heresy of Duns Scotus, who declared the will as independent of the intellect. Now came Berkeley,

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Hume, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Freud to make havoc of the whole considerate construction of our ethics and logic—of man's ability to know and power to judge. The physical universe began to crumble. Euclid proved less able to explain the world's behaviour than such fantastic geometers as Lobachevski, Gauss, Monkowski. Matter dissolved. The atom became a congeries of mere movement. "The stable foundations of physics," says Alfred North Whitehead, "have broken up; the old foundations of scientific thought are becoming unintelligible. Time, Space, Material, Ether, Electricity, Mechanism, Organism, Configuration, Structure, Pattern, Function . . . all require reinterpretation." The Law of cause and effect, body of the logic of our lives, followed in the abyss. European man, bereft of revelation, fell back on the science of sense; bereft of that, he fell back, for surety, on self. Now the surety of self was taken from him. If time and space might be configurations of his thinking, cause and effect became mere relative sequence, and the thought which found all things within this time and space was turned destructively upon itself. The great Body of western experience broke down; and we were hurled into the modern chaos.

You can gauge the state of Europe's cultural decomposition, by contrasting it with the Body wherein Dante dwelt. Everything there had its place, moved with purposive rhythm into the Whole. From God

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to priest, from Emperor to serf, from Heaven to Hell, from star to atom, from good to evil, all was integral. This was a world, moreover, in which Dante lived together with his cook. That Whole is gone. But organic death does not mean inanition. Look at any corpse advanced in its decay, and see how live it is. Europe swarms in death.

2

The man of science might "prove" the death of a body in several ways. He might analyse metabolism, blood or lymph, and come to the same result as if he simply said: "The heart has stopped," or "There is no longer breathing." Indeed, from each individual cell still living, were he wise enough, he might configure the whole death. The essence of a living body is an "I"; it is articulate in self-interested action, in integral feeling and possibly in words. The "I" of Europe fades. It no longer acts, no longer speaks, no longer possesses unitary concepts.

Study the disintegration of religion. Observe the withdrawal in the "Renaissance" of the arts from science, and of the artist from the world. Note how the mind of Europe, which once had a language—Latin—now mumbles in disparate accents; how nation stands shut against nation, class against class, clique against clique, and person against person. Radio, telegraph, "movie," like the palavers of diplomacy and trade, are noises emitted by special social appetites or cells: they

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are no Word: whatever Word remains they render less accessible than ever.

Perhaps the clearest token of this break-up is the separation of the Church and the State. This separation has become an arrogant ideal, whereas it should be the confession of man's failure. If Church and State mean anything at all, their divorce is that of spirit and body, of thought and deed. To make of this a social goal is to crown chaos. Religion and politics must form a whole, if either is to be a part of health. The peace that is gained by disestablishing their union is the peace of death.

Enlightened thought in the modern age has had this death for a theme, and Europe's resurrection for its message. Genius has made frantic efforts to reclaim the dimming, dissolving "I" of Christendom. Nationalism, which replaced the passionate ideal of Europe's brotherhood in Christ, was such an effort: and such was the internationalism of Karl Marx, striving to knit one class across frontiers and—since the hierarchic order was no longer valid—to make a heaven of homogeneous classlessness. But by and large Europe glories in this euthanasia of disunion. It goes farther: it divorces actual from formal government: subtly in such lands as France, graciously in Great Britain, crudely in Italy and Spain. Spirit goes one way, mind goes another, body goes a third. Spirit is disembodied; body is lightless. . . . Pick out your own proof of the death in Europe. . . .

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3

The life of western man as an organic Body reaches fulness in what we call the Middle Ages. With rigorous, cruel selection, the thought and form of the Mediterranean world is here made into a Whole which each man shares. Aristotle, Plato, Plotinus, the Prophets, the Patrists, the knights, the monks, are men who builded it—and all men lived it. Pope Gregory VII, who declared Rome's unitary lordship, makes for it a heart. Aquinas gives it logic and a mind. Dante and Wolfram¹ and Petrarch sing its highest song. Its flaws are fatal, and we shall understand them when we consider what it meant by knowledge and by action, by the soul and by the Church. But its splendour is immortal; for it is the first conscious attempt of occidental man to create with all the man and with all men an embodied spiritual Whole.

Its symbol is the Mediterranean Sea which mothered it: the sunlit, bounded, middle water. Now, at its height, it begins to die. And the symbol of its death is the Atlantic.

4

In no true sense was America discovered by Columbus. He, Vasco da Gama, and the explorers who followed, touched shores that were margins of far

¹The poet of "Parzival."

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countries. They *discovered* the Ocean. The Way found by Columbus was the antithesis of the Latin sea: it was uncharted, it led to limitless lands. Its unboundedness was the symbol of that old symbol's passing.

Men's thoughts and dreams had bridged the Mediterranean. For ages, east and west, south and north, the littorals had mingled. Europe came of this. Now, parabola-wise, men's dreams move to the Ocean and Europe begins to die. The conquest of world power, by arms and science; the political crumbling of the Catholic State; the religious vagrancies that follow Luther—all the modern shifts in value and in power, are traits of Europe's dislocation. And they are traits, as well, of the new Way—the Atlantic.

A body breaks. Potent but no more intact, its energy flows outward. In wholeness, it had been contingent upon God alone: the Gothic spires had expressed it, a universe turned upward. It becomes a multiverse turned horizontal. For it is breaking. Europe bleeds sea-ward, into soils unknown.

And the old Mediterranean dies. Into the Atlantic flows its death: the new search of man, the new earth-wise boundlessness.

Beyond the symbolic Ocean there will be found a land, misnamed at first, misjudged, not yet revealed: America.

II: THE SENSE OF THE WHOLE

1

OUR view of Europe is our need to define the background of *situation* from which America may intelligibly emerge. But this is not enough: we must as well define the background of *value* which alone can make valid the America we discover.

Wholeness is no mere desired goal; it is the origin and the end of all our creative being. Wholeness is one in life as in letter, with holiness and health.¹ Wholeness must be both personal and social, in order to be either. Individual man cannot achieve his health unless he live, consciously, within a Whole that holds all life.

2

We approach the sense of the Whole, by considering religion.

Spengler, in his "Comedy of Cultures," carries on the fantasy that the religious genius, blooming with the youth of a people, hardens in the science of its age, and withers in the materialism of its death. Perhaps Comte and Spencer are responsible for this idea, which is as blandly accepted by modern intellectuals, as it would have been repugned by those of earlier epochs. In the days when Scripture was literally be-

¹The root of all these words is the Anglo-Saxon *hal*.

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lieved, the progress of religion was the norm. The Hebrews were judged to be a people which from materialism had evolved toward religion; when they backslid, they were rebuked and destroyed. The Greeks and Romans also were peoples which, from materialist and scientific thought, grew to the universal and at length were worthy of religious revelation. The barbarians who took Rome and came to Christ were supposed to have grown through a like progress.

With the eighteenth century, all this was changed. Rousseau, finding his broken world unwieldy, divorced the classic values of religion from "civilisation."¹ Save for a few poets, the intellectuals accepted the antithesis and chose "civilisation." The idea of progress, although sprung from a religious source and nurtured by religion, came to be freed of religious connotation. Value and Wisdom parted from the Lord. The intellectual world believed that religion and science were opposed: religion was the way of the child, science the path of the adult.

No shallower idea ever wreaked havoc in the human mind. The cosmology and anthropology of pre-Darwinian Europe may have been naïve; but if a myth is a notion manifestly false, our fathers who accepted Jonah and the Whale were hard-headed fellows compared to their positivistic sons, who thought that our religious sense was somehow kin with the vestigial tail inherited from the ape.

¹He was more typical of his age, closer to Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, than he supposed.

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Religion, of course, is neither a sense nor an impulse. It is not "natural" at all. Religion is a system of rationalisations built upon a human need which, like all needs, corresponds to a sense and an impulse. As substantial creatures, we have the needs of our senses; even if, with fundamental needs, the sense seems to awaken only with a deprivation. We need to breathe, but are aware of this only with a sense of suffocation. We need to eat, but have the sense of hunger. We need to get warm and comfortable, from a sense of cold and discomfort. Some needs, such as the sexual, are made manifest in a kind of sensory permeation which can become acute. The point is, that there can be no need at all, even visceral, even glandular, without some sense to token either its satisfaction or its lack. Since, then, religion is so universal as to reveal some universal need, we may graphically trace it through the sense with which it is connected.

There is in all religions a common trait: they stand on the premise of order. Man, confronting a multiverse, transfigures it into some kind of order in which he has his share. This order will be animistic, referring the trees and beasts of a jungle to the savage need; or it will be cosmic, according to the scope of consciousness of the religion. Order of some kind is always there; and every order is a unity fused from variety by a mind. Order is the anatomy of every whole. Therefore religion is a building of some kind

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of whole. The whole of religion is always one which the believer experiences as well as knows: which he can share in (this is holiness) by a certain way of life. Thus religion is the deliberate building of a whole: this building of a whole reveals the need of a whole: and this need of a whole must answer to a sense.¹

Since any order predicates a whole, it is clear that other of men's activities are related, in need and sense, to what underlies religion. Science, too, is the establishment of wholes.² The whole of science differs in that it remains outside the experience of the knower; he does not enter it. A man may order the stars into a cosmos and yet not live in their wholeness. Therefore, astronomy is called a science. The order of science is pure concept; the materials of its order are supposed to be bare data of the physical senses. Since the whole living man does not enter in this conceptual order, it lacks the spirit which is life: it lacks *body*. Art, too, is a making of wholes. But the materials of art are not, like those of science, merely *conceived* in order: they are *made* into a body which has order. To effect this incarnation, the self of the artist must enter the materials of his art. The art-body will consist not alone, as in science, of what the physical senses offer but of the personal spirit and emotion of the artist. It will be a whole created and shared by him. What

¹In developing this thought it could be shown that other needs and senses, answered by various religions, either are accidental and extraneous to religion or are mediate expressions of the underlying need and sense of the whole.

²Despite their specialisation, the compartments of science tend at their depths to fuse.

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art creates is always a body, and the spirit of the creator makes this body alive. The norm of this body is the body of the artist—the human body; and the sense of æsthetic form is an unconscious adumbration of our sense of unity with our own body. Now, the self of the enjoyer enters the art-body also: he, too, establishes with it an experience of wholeness. And this experience—the unity between the enjoyer and what otherwise is outside and impenetrable to him—is his sense of beauty. . . . But we must not here consider the differences and merging correspondence between science, art and religion. My purpose is only to make plain how universal this sense of the Whole must be, since cultural behaviour is but a series of responses to it.

3

This is no wonder, when we realise that at its simplest the sense of the whole is the sense of self. All that William James has said about the mystical experience may be applied to the experience of self. Man takes himself as a whole, long before he takes the world; he knows himself as a whole, ages before he knows such terms as brain, heart, soul. His sense of self is not irrational, but pre-rational; not ineffable save that it comes before all words and thoughts. It is the forever pre-present, forever (when one seeks to know and to express it) retreating nucleus of feeling that introduces knowledge and expression.

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Now there are certain men who know the unity of the Whole of Being—including, of course, themselves—in the same way that any man knows the unity of his person. These men have been called the mystics. Their sense of Wholeness, without abandoning the personal which is its core, reaches beyond it. Since they are called mystics, it is well to call their sense of the Whole the mystic sense.

This sense is universal. It is pre-rational, like the sense of personal wholeness. It is ineffable at the outset, also like the sense of self, in that it must precede all self-expression. But it is in all men; else science, art and religion would be illegible pages. The mystic (like the scientist and the artist) differs from other men merely in degree. He articulates what men sense, else his articulation would be aloof from men's need. The true mystic is he who, *with his life*, expresses the cosmic self, in a way comparable with personal self-expression. To contend, as James did, that the mystic experience is finally ineffable is nonsense: from the Upanishads to Blake and Whitman, high men have expressed and talked of little else.

4

But as soon as we do talk or act, in the behest of a sense, what happens? We organise, we reason. What a vast rationalisation is the science and art of cookery upon the need of food! What an intricate structure is marriage on the sex sense and the social sense! Re-

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ligions like those of Christian Rome, of Hinduism, of the Jews, are magnificent constructions for man's need to fulfil his sense of wholeness with all life. Modern science is an analogous construction¹ in the field of concept and of the physical senses. Great art² embodies the same sense in experiential, communicable forms.

Far, then, from being antithetical, science, art and religion are related in a series, whose common quantity is the sense of the whole. It is a sense that grows vast: the animistic whole binding a savage and his sun becomes the gravitational universe of Newton; the tribal Jahveh becomes the God of Jesus and Spinoza. It is a sense, moreover, whose expressions can be placed in hierarchic order.

This order must briefly concern us, because of the nonsense that has been written about it. . . . We are told, for instance, that fear and wonder are motives of religion. This is so, precisely to the degree that they are motives of science and of art—which is to say: not fundamentally at all. A cat feels fear and wonder; it responds to them by fighting clear of the object that has caused them. *It declines to establish a connection.* Its sense of wholeness stops at the nutritive and sexual need: its fear and wonder produce

¹It is clear that the scientist's desire to understand "all life" means its possession as a whole within the unity of the understander. Modern science has learned that this—its classic goal—is impossible of achievement within the conceptual bounds of science.

²Let the reader consider such art as the Sphinx, the Cathedral of Chartres, the Book of Job, the Comedy of Dante, the major works of Palestrina, Bach or Beethoven.

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neither science nor religion. But primitive man, so moved to fear and wonder, let us say, by the eclipse of the sun, *goes towards the sun*. He will name the sun, he will invent a myth to explain its action, he will apply this knowledge to his personal welfare. All this means that he has established a relation, which is a kind of wholeness, between himself and the sun. The man's fear, in this case, seems to be the function of a need totally different from the need which is served by the fear of the brute. The brute in fear runs away from, or otherwise strives to destroy, the object: the man in fear goes towards the object and strives to get into relation with it. The source we are seeking therefore is not fear at all, but what underlies a type of human fear (causing religion) and what does not underlie the fear of the brute (since the brute begets no religion). This differentiated source is clearly man's need of experiencing wholes. The brute's fear is the result of his threatened isolation; he therefore runs away to preserve this isolation. The man's fear (of the type we are considering) is the result of his unfulfilled relation with life: he creates myths, religion, etc., in order to fulfil this relation. This need of wholeness, whose deprivation comes to man at times in the form of fear, must correspond to a sense of the whole. Man fears what he is unrelated to; and religion is one means of overcoming this fear. Hence it must be plain how superficial is the popular diagnosis of fear and wonder as

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the cause of religion: since they are but *symptoms* of the working of the sense of the whole in man. This need of the Whole, moreover, in its early stages, will be the parent of science (ordered classification), of applied science and of art, rather than of religion. This is clear in the child. He begins by naming the world, by applying it to himself: "Mama. Mama is mine." And from this authentic science, he goes on to imitation, to self-expression—elements of art. There he stops. There, whole peoples have stopped.

The mystic sense of the Whole, since by definition it transcends the person, must transcend and transform the personal will. The man whose "universe" is but the tool of personal desire has no real universe at all: he has reached the order neither of pure science nor of religion.¹ Thus we learn that most "religion"—since it reduces a universe to the gratification of personal will for power or self-survival—is not religion at all; it is magic. And magic is a kind of applied science.

The medicine man, the archaic priest, had specific controls over Nature (magic, spells, revelations, dispensations); and these they employed to get results. They were hence the brothers of Edison and Ford, rather than of Buddha and Isaiah. The priesthood

¹The geneticists who claim that all religion is merely the structure of some personal desire—sexual, perhaps, or economic—are illogical solip-sists unless they apply the same conclusion to science and to their own theories. The geneticist is a man who, having triumphantly discovered that a rotary press will not go without oil, proclaims that Oil is the Cause of the press, and the author and subject of everything it prints.

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of Egypt, for example, was a scientific body in its action on the people. For the people did not share or experience the Order which the holy men controlled: they submitted to it, they were "protected" by it in an external relation much like that of modern men to modern science. Even so great a man as Moses, of whose true mystic sense I have no doubt, stood before his people chiefly in a rôle of science. He applied his Whole to the sensory needs of his children. He had to save their bodies, ere the Prophets could uplift them. Since they were children, he met them in terms which they could understand—on the level of science. But no true sense of the Whole can suffer the exploiting of its knowledge to partial, personal ends. In it, the sense of selfhood, by definition, becomes transfigured: knows immortality in the act of knowing the mortality of the person.¹

5

We may then conclude: the mystic sense, whose complete structure is religion, is the latest and least developed sense of man. Man's sense of sight probably has several million years of evolution; it has an organ vastly older than mankind. All the specific physical senses have their specific nerves and organs. There is a sixth sense, the sense of personal self; and it is safe, with the behaviourists, to call it physical as

¹He who loves God cannot strive that God loves him in return."—Spinoza.

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well. It is, at least, unthinkable without the physical senses. A man might have a kinesthesia of his person without ears and eyes: but, with no sensory experience at all, he could have no delimiting awareness of self and not-self. The mystic sense of the Whole is unthinkable, also, without the personal core. But it differs basally from the personal whole-sense in that it is no longer absolutely personal: body and person become the focus for the *immediate* experience of what is beyond (although including) them; the common sense of self is transfigured into the sense of life.

The mystic sense is rudimentary and weak. Perhaps this is why it has not articulated for itself an organ.¹ What sort of an organ will it be? The eye, for instance, which is the organ of a fractional sense, is itself a fraction of the body. So the organ of the sense of the Whole would be the entire man. As man has the eye to enact light in his consciousness, he will have the wholeness of body and of mind to enact Wholeness within him.

Of course, logic and philosophy assure us that, if man is to achieve the mystic sense, it must have been there from the beginning—there in the plasmic slime whence life crawled up. This is true. You cannot insert a strictly new thing into an organic process. Man's sense of the Whole must spring from the Whole whence primordially he sprang. But such a

¹We must not forget that early animals get along without our special organs. They "see" without eyes; digest without stomachs; reproduce without genitals; even "think" or feel without brains.

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sense may long be latent. We assume that it is not active in animals. For it is not in children. True religion and objective art are beyond the experience of children.¹ The history of the sense of the Whole seems to have begun but yesterday. Its activity with Hindus, Hebrews and Egyptians was abortive; since there has been no organic building from it. The reason for this failure is important; for it holds our modern promise.

If I am right, and the sense of the Whole must be a culmination of the other (the physical) senses, then the Structure that expresses it can rise only upon sound structures of the other senses. Science, as we know, is the construction of a whole from the data brought to us by observation—by the strictly physical senses. This is to say: there can be no adequate religion, until first there is adequate science.²

History bears this out. From the early science (thaumaturgies, magics, mysteries) and early arts, rose and worked the builders of religion: the Scripture-makers of Torah, Testament, Upanishad, Vedanta. The religions got along, while the sciences on which they rested remained valid. But when the sciences melted into mud and sand, the religions melted also. The “inroads of science on religion” therefore

¹The vogue of children's art and literature to-day merely proves that the adults are on the level of the children. (This is no slur on children, as certain emotional educators seem to have supposed when the chapter first appeared; it points merely to the undeveloped state of most adults.)

²In fully developing this idea later, I shall add “and adequate art.” Here it would take us too far afield.

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prove the precise contrary of the contemporary notion: they prove that religion is culminant from its base of science, in the exact way that the sense of the Whole is culminant from the lower physical senses.

Man's religions have crumbled, because the sub-structure—the Order built from the revelation of the physical senses—was continuously shifting. He knew not enough about nature, about his person, about the social body, to make these primal wholes permanent, authoritative, sound. He lacked all method for knowing. The past failure of religion is, then, largely the failure of past science. It has brought us to our modern Nadir. Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Einstein; Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant; the thinkers in psychological, political and social orders build from the débris of worlds a new foundation for the future culminant Whole—*our* true religion.

III: ACTION AS DECAY

1

Now, with more hope of understanding what it means, let us return to the situation that has made us. . . . Europe—the cultural Whole, ordered of social and spiritual forms, wherein men dwelt as cells within a body—this Europe exists no more. The break of its hierarchic organs meant the body's death. But dissolution brought release to what was held within the controlling Pattern. A greater freedom came to many elements, created a new ebullient life in Europe.

These traits of the death of an old world are the modern virtues. Liberty, freedom of thought, discovery, adventure, national independence, personal self-expression, are the kind of noble name they won. The Atlantic was their symbol. The integer of their value is Action.

The regard for action as an intrinsic value is uniquely modern. In the East, value was dominantly quietistic. Lao-Tsze and the Upanishads reveal this. Buddha led an active life, but his system was a discipline which aimed at the defeat of action. In the Bhagavad-Gitá, action has value as a method for self-trial; it is the acid test of personal detachment; the goal is still release from the need of action. The

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Hebrews made of action a mere tool: even the active Greeks reserved to intellectual knowledge and the balance of beauty—static states—their highest crown of value.¹ Had the Romans been more philosophical, they might have ennobled action. Lucretius and the Epicureans were on the verge of a fresh attitude. But with Christianity their influence broke. Action was again debased. The values of Catholic Europe became contemplation, other-worldly knowledge, an inert vigil for the Lord. Knight-errancy meant action; but the goal was the Grail, and the Grail meant rest. The monastery was the locus of salvation. The nun was holier than the wife: marriage, indeed, was honoured as a sacrament only begrudgingly to cheat the Devil. When nun and monk led active lives, they were justified by prayer and meditation; their action was an impure note forced on them by the impurity of the world, and cleansed in the fixity of their devotion. Value was stillness; it was placed in the hereafter—beyond the field of any possible action. Adam and Eve had been compelled to work, only by the disfavour of the Lord; the Passion of Christ erased their curse of toil. Grace had no relationship with action.

The turn in Europe is typified by the Crusades. They began as an action which was the means to a re-

¹Possibly Sparta was an exception. Its disfavour, until modern times, would make it the exception which proved the rule. The Heracleitan theory of eternal flux is not related to the concept of action as value. Heracleitus typically concluded that the individual must submit, must lose himself in the fiery flux, and that "when we die our souls are restored to life." The Greeks, in their values, were more nearly an Oriental people than the Hebrews.

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ligious end. The end grew dim; the love of the Crusaders reverted to the means. Palestine, Syria, the Mediterranean isles, ceased to be the holy victims of Mohammed: became arenas for pelf and for sport. In Europe's holiness, men's motions had been fused into the immobility of God. As the Body of Europe dissolved, energy became tangential; dream and power poured to horizontal courses. Since the Goal was no more an ideal rest in God, action grew perpetuate; set itself up as value. The *spirit* of men's activity had been the unmoved Mover. It became Motion.

From the ideally immobile World-State (the stance for reaching God) broke out particles that were nations; and their spirit was unbounded action.¹ Always there had been wars and conquests; now these were idealised as state-behaviour. Money, which had been a *holding*, became capital, which is an *acting*. The discoverer was born, who lived by action. Adventure and exploration became intrinsic values, values so great that they sent men beyond the Atlantic.

History changed into an evolution, a purposive action holding its own end within itself: it led to no static paradise or Nirvana, but, going on forever,

¹The League of Nations is an inorganic counterfeit of the Catholic World-State. That World-State was an ultimate and real value; individual states were real only in so far as their princes ruled by *divine* right—i. e., shared in the Whole of the Catholic World-State, which gave to them their status. But with our League, the real is each state: real by its *own* right. The League is a shadowy union of individuals, and receives whatever value it has from their optional *contract*. The difference between the motionless "status" and the dynamic "contract" symbolises the change we are considering, in its national form.

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spawned more action. Progress within human limits was invented to displace the old religious progress that had led direct from man to angel. Such progress, in lieu of the interlude that man's life had been between Adam lost and Adam saved, made of mankind an infinite measure. Action within this new infinity became the norm and the end.

Now classes began consciously to move. Institutions became mere facets of man's whirling changes. Personal status which, as the word reveals, had once been static in a Holy Body, dissolved into the atomic contract—each man, a charge of explosive action, "electing" to belong to an optional group.

Within this amazing world of newly infinite man, the intellect was bound to lose prestige, and to give way to the will.¹ The intellect considers, defines, makes finite. The intellect knows no infinity. But the will acts, moves—its world, from indefinite, soon grows infinite. Duns Scotus and William of Occam had, before their time, declared the independence of the will: from the disintegrant north had come this note that was to shatter the symphony of Europe. For now, metaphysics, reborn of the Atlantic, became the instrument of action. It accepted the rulership of will, not to destroy it like the Hindus, but to

¹When I make no specific definition of my own for the words I employ, I am assuming a common definition. Thus, by such terms as will, reason, intellect, faith, etc., I understand what any reader of the modern philosophers and psychologists will understand. The fine distinctions among these moderns will not impede the general comprehension of my text.

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enlarge its dominion. From Aristotle to Aquinas and Descartes, philosophy had been the architect of Reason: it had upheld a God who did not move, a universe whose aspirance towards God was a moving out of movement into rest. Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, declared their several and successful wars, with the physicists to aid, against this Mediterranean science. Time and space became infected with subjective mind, thence with subjective will; the universe of sense and reason was turned into a function of desire. God's lineaments, with Hegel, became motion. Motion, with Bergson, became God. With the positivists and pragmatists He melted altogether into Action.¹

A universe of motion, which was a rationale of Europe's dissolution. . . . Men's eyes, which once had seen ultimate fixity in all that they beheld *since they were held*, now discovered motion in molecule, in atom, in State, in Spirit, *since they were moving*.

2

The stage was set for the triumph of modern science. Mediæval science was a structure based on God's revelation. The "real field" was God: science, which reasoned from it, was a *logos* of God—theology. Modern science is a structure based on the

¹I trust it is clear that I am not here presenting my own philosophical convictions. The point is not now whether motion is real or unreal; whether will is independent of intellect; whether Lorentz is truer than Euclid: it is to denote the dissolution of a world of concepts through the incursion of other concepts.

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revelation of the senses. The senses give us the "real field" of Nature: science, which is a *logos* of Nature, is natural science. To deem our science superior *as knowledge* to that of the schoolmen is to prove that we are as intolerant as they were. The revelation of Scripture had little of what we call "fact," and much truth: the revelation of our senses has fact (since fact is defined as what our senses give us), and almost no truth whatever.¹ Both revelations are satisfactory, so long as they satisfy: both sciences "work" so long as man works with them. The number of divisions in Hell is important, when you believe in Hell; the number of electrons in an atom, when you believe in the atom.

The difference between these sciences is great: and may be known only when we have ceased from being natural-minded about theology, and theological-minded about our natural science. The difference lies in the two fields of rationalisation: it is the difference between a world bounded forever and explorable by reason, and a world that is the infinite kaleidoscope of the creative will.

Scriptural revelation was shut to the personal will. The field was supplied: intellect and poesy might elaborate, might even romp around in it. But it was like a bounded sea, a Mediterranean sea. No jot

¹This is so, since a fact or a report of the senses can not be called a truth until it is related with the whole of our experience. The myths of Scripture had become so related by generations of philosophers and poets: hence they were truths. Our scientific facts are not yet so related by the philosophers and poets yet unborn.

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could be added or subtracted. And if the will went out of bounds, there was heresy and damnation. The revelation of the senses, which is the field of modern science, is boundless and to be discovered ever more, ever afresh, by human action and imagination.¹ It is an infinite Atlantic, for the will to sail on. Rational theory could not alter the substance of the mediæval field. But modern thought—idealism, realism, neo-realism, materialism, etc., etc.—transfigures the field brought to science by the senses. The mediæval *worked* his field: we invent ours.

This is the thrilling difference between the mediæval and the modern science. It is not the difference between a lie and a truth; but between a truth bounded by imperious Dogma and a boundless energy of life that may create a modern Truth at last. A dimension has been added, not yet to knowledge, but to living: the dimension of human will as a creator. And the way of this creator is action. . . .

3

But we must not forget that modern science began as part of the destructive action whereby the Whole of Europe was dissolved. Within itself, it has no integrating principle; its field is limited to the physical premises and its principle is limited to within its field. Its early masters, knowing this, and need-

¹An example of this action is the microscope and the telescope: an instance of this imagination is the mathematical work that follows some new "discovery" in a star or the atom.

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ing a Rule outside of what they measured, still consciously professed the mediæval God whom their own works were fated to deny.¹

Child of dissolution, modern science hastened the process which bore it. It pushed the horizons back until they disappeared. It reset the stars in gravitational space, and invented ether, and discarded it. It weighed the atom and then blew it up; separated Time from Man and mingled them. Man it transformed from fallen angel into ascending beast; and analysed away the measure of ascent, and corroded the measure of measures—the human mind—until mind melted into the measured substance. Modern science, child of chaos, fulfilled our chaos.

It was not yet done. It had to bring a monster in our midst; an anarchic mindless master in place of God, to trammel us and rule us. It put upon disrupted modern man the embodiment of his own dissociate will. The Machine . . .

4

The machine is action, particularised and dissociated into a body. It symbolises the final break of a universe, wherein the personal will and every object had been theoretically fused within the Will of God,² into a multiverse made up of independent wills and of insulate objects. The machine differs from the

¹Galileo, Newton, Descartes, Pascal, Leibnitz, Kepler, etc., were all traditionally devout men.

²The causes of the break of this universe are discussed later.

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tool in that its energising power (*applied to the tool*) is *informed within* the machine. This energising power is taken from nature—gasoline, electricity, steam, etc. It differentiates the machine, also, from the hand in which the energising power, although informed, is human and not dissociable from the body. Of course, in hand, tool and machine, the personal will is the director. But the machine lends itself most wondrously to animistic worship of the personal will (1) because it seems to have independent life and thereby enhances the splendour of the will's dominion, (2) because it brings not alone an external body but the forces of external nature within the will's dominion and (3) because it enables man to identify his will with nature's powers and with the external world of action.

The machine as we have it, then, embodies two principles which are unrelated save as master and slave: the personal will acting alone, and the particular natural force which makes the machine work. The machine, as well as these principles which it embodies, is a thing unrelated to any Whole beyond it. It is a part of life which man, in his dissociate state, regards as a whole in itself.

Specifically, a machine embodies a merē part of a man's personal will. Thus a man wants to move: his car moves him. And a man wants to shine: his car supplies him with glamour. His car may help him to many another fraction of his will. It can never

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entirely fulfil it—if he is, indeed, a man. Multiply the car by twenty million, therefore, and all you have is a multiplication of fractional embodiments of personal wills. Multiply all machines, each of which embodies analogous fractions, and you have merely chaos. The spread of the machine in a world where the machine expresses personal wills that are not *themselves* integrated by the sense of the Whole, can only be the “progress” of chaos. The fact that the invention of each machine hinged on discoveries of science, which in its pure form is an approach to Order and the Whole, does not refute the practical direction of machines in the contrary sense—away from order into chaos.

In this meaning, therefore, the machine is an ultimate of dissolution. From a Catholic world in which each atom, each thought, each person, each institution, was theoretically transfigured to fit into a whole, there can be no extremity of process more extreme than this configuration of matter and force which moves alone, which does a special work unvarying, in contingency with the naked will of the maker and of the man who runs it.

But of course, this present state of the machine is not irrevocable: *it is not, indeed, intrinsic so much of the machine as of the state of man*. At the risk of anticipating the ends of my study, I must make this plain. I am no enemy of the machine, no harker-back in dialectical disguise to an impossible romantic or

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Tolstoyan Nature.¹ The idyllic Nature of modern man is his to-morrow, not his past: it will contain his machine as surely as it will his body.² The machine is an anarchic principle, only so long as man is an anarchic atom. The machine is a monster, only so long as man is not wholly man. The present capacity of the machine to surround man, to determine the forms and colours of his acts, to hold his energy and his allegiance, is a negative reflex of man's incapacity as yet to create a Whole in modern terms, and to assimilate the machine as a means and a symbol within it. The machine to-day does not engage man's depths. It engages only his surfaces—his personal power, his cult of personal will, his need to master time and space—all surfaces of action. Man can get from the machine only what he puts into it. So long as he expresses his dissolute will by means of it, it will symbolise and enhance this dissolution. And the fact that the machine appears to compensate for this apartness of each personal will, by bringing men closer together in time, in space and in communication, of course proves my point. Extension is not Wholeness—even as time cannot sum into eternity. The physical unity of the world (being brought about by the machine) cannot mean wholeness unless the principle of wholeness is within us. . . . But suppose that man achieves this wholeness in terms of his ac-

¹I refer the reader to my essay "The Machine and Metaphysics," published by *The New Republic* in 1925 and reprinted in "Prose Preferences," an anthology edited by Cox and Palmer.

²See Chapter VII.

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tion. The machine then may become a means towards this wholeness—a means of fusing his control over nature with his control over self. At once, it will be a symbol of his spiritual growth.

To make this clear, consider the symbol of the Cross. At the beginning we may assume that animistic man worshipped his own vital force (the phallus) and nature's external force (the tree). The phallus was not a personal symbol: it stood for father and son, for the fecundation of woman, for family and clan. Yet it was internal; it did not bridge the gap between the man and his world. At some inspired epoch, this bridge was made: phallus and tree were joined: the force of self and the force of nature were wedded into a whole. The symbol of that marriage is the *lingam* of India, the *ankh* of Egypt, the Christian Cross. It is not a mere phallus—and it never was. It is phallus and tree: the self and the non-self giving birth to Life. No such fusion and resultant birth of spirit has yet taken place in the machine. It is still nakedly the symbol of man's personal will imposing itself *over* the world outside him. Therefore, it embodies no consciousness of Wholeness; it is not yet creative; it is dissolute and destructive. . . .

All this will be clear ere we conclude.¹ For the present, we must go no farther than our modern state. Where men were "run" by the particular desires which a machine fulfils—the desire to move, the desire

¹In Part Two.

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to get rich, etc.—they were really being “run” by their machines. Their enslavement of the forces of nature—instead of fusion with these forces—paradoxically caused their enslavement by their own personal wills. We came to have a world where men were wilful atoms—atoms of will—dissolved from what had been a spiritual Whole. These atoms of will were embodied in machines. We came to have a world in which men, having lost their God, worshipped their own desires. Therefore the machine, most perfect symbol of personal desire, was turned into an idol: man identified himself with it and made it the object of his self-adoration.

Again, coming to this nadir of action as decay, coming to the machine as the ultimate unit of anarchic will, we come upon America. . . .

IV: WRECKERS AND RECORDERS

1

OF course, to build and to break are diastole and systole in the heart of genius. Although it is true that Copernicus, Newton, Kepler, Luther, Calvin, Kant were men who warped apart the Ptolemaic Christian Republic; true that the discoverers, in making extra-European conduits, drained blood and trade so that at last even the economic whole of Europe was destroyed, we accept their greatness. But our work, only, can justify their work. Only in so far as the modern men of science and religion, rending that old world, are proved *by the event* to have been building elsewhere; and as the pioneers who drew the blood of Europe nurtured an embryo that we shall make to grow into a world, can our respect fulfil them. This is to say, that to love them rightly we must understand them. We must know the boundaries of their work as the outset of our own. We must know that, essentially, the successful men of modern times—they who were *at home* in Europe's falling House—were wreckers.

No one and no group of them created a Whole, in place of the Whole they were destroying. They were too contingent on the world they emerged from; they accepted certain assumptions of that world, they

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reacted negatively against others. No religion, after Rome, enlisted the entire man, personal, political, social. No art, after the yet mediæval forms of Bach, El Greco, Shakespeare, created a whole Man. The scientists, amending Aristotle, still concurred with faith in mediæval notions. One and all, they were muddled and divided men. And the order they created is a diagram of black and white—of two dimensions: it is no House in which man, with heart and soul and æsthetic eye, may enter. Natural science was founded on approximations so feeble, so arbitrarily exclusive, that it shifts each season. The same holds with the constructions of political, social and psychological science. Nationalist, socialist, communist, democrat, anarchist, utilitarian, empiricist, deist, etc., etc., took fragments of mediæval Europe as their basis. Not alone their material, even their vision remained a fragment. The modern era is not an independent epoch, not a beginning. The best that can be said for it is that it performed its task superbly: it crumbled the first cultural body of the West. It bequeathed to us a chaos in which no substance has been lost, much added. The modern era, at its best, is a supreme challenge for the creation of a World.

2

These wreckers were men of action. In laboratory or in square-rigged frigate, they acted. And they were at home in a dissolving Europe because their no-

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tions rhymed with, and enhanced, their world's organic process. Another sort of wrecker was the poet.

With the modern age, he becomes a recluse, a rebel, a pariah. Compare the confessions of Saint Augustine, of Hugo de Saint Victor, of Dante, with the confessions after Shakespeare.¹ The earlier poets felt themselves one with their brothers: they were parts of a whole, and this affinity was the motive of their self-confession. Even those who, like Geoffroy Rudel, yearned for a "distant princess" were but expressing the Platonic other-worldliness that made them one with their world. But the modern deemed himself unique; the wine of his self-revelation was pressed from the grape of solitude. Lyricism, until Petrarch, is the ordinate refrain that rhymes all men together. The modern lyric is anarchic: the report and the appeal of the exception for others equally bereft. The dissident strain is already heard in Shakespeare's sonnets. The Lakeists of England can be at home only in uninhabited hills. Baudelaire and Rimbaud sing to the Enemy of man, concoct artificial worlds to dwell in, since the world of their birth has become alien to them. Art that embodies wholes flees from life, which will no longer answer to its purpose; builds its ivory tower; becomes art for art's sake—pathetically feeding on itself.

The high creator, going into wilful exile, drags the intelligence of Europe with him and so abets the de-

¹The archetypes are Rousseau and Amiel. The exception is the mature Goethe of "Dichtung und Wahrheit."

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molishment of Europe. Blake consorts with angels. Nietzsche, having found no man in all his world, invokes a Superman to destroy it. Schopenhauer woos suicide in the East. Châteaubriand finds haven in the American forests. Rousseau and Tolstoy are lovers longing back, the one to an invisible childhood, the other to a literal Scripture.

Now the sneaking serpent walks
In mild humility
And the just man rages in the wild
Where lions roam. . . .

Thus Blake, picturing the Maker and Solver in a dissolving world. . . .

3

There is another class of creator. Unlike the lyric poet or the prophet who can make their Whole, if need be, from their entrails, or from dreams of Ultima Thule, these men find their materials in the extended world about them: the sticks and stones and flesh of human uses. If they find death, they employ death for their æsthetic life: if disorder, they make an order, not *from* but *of* disorder. These men are the summarists and recorders.

Dante was of this class when he wrote his Comedy. He used verse, he called his Comedy divine: for harmony and relationship with God were explicit of the world he lived in. Like a great novelist, he told the

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story of mankind—of his society, in extension. Like a great novelist, he chose for his scenes the situations that essentially brought out his values. Terrestrial life, as he saw it, had its focus in the hereafter, since life's dynamic aim was liberation of the spirit. Therefore, as a good craftsman would, he placed his characters where they were most themselves: in hell and heaven. Since man was of God, even damnation was an integer of truth; the damned belonged to the divine. Note that in Dante's story there is no deep dissonance between the hero and his world. Note it well, for in all the centuries to come you will not find such harmony again. Suffering, struggle, defeat there are: they fuse into a general accord. The damned of Dante's hell are tortured, they do not disagree. They know the identical Universe of Beatrice. Its physical compartments are indeed the symbols of hierarchic Spirit spreading intact from infinite One to infinitesimal Many. Each chord of Dante's music resolves to silence.

Advance three hundred years, and read the work of another summarist. "Don Quixote" is a tale of discord. Discord between the hero and his world, between God and man, between Christian ideals and the human order. The world which the Knight meets upon the road is body: he, in his gesture of service, justice, love, is spirit. He and his world glance off, each from the other. His activity is comic, since his world is careless. The damned of Dante had their

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holy place, and were at home in it. The just of Cervantes is so utterly dispossessed that he is not crucified like Christ: he is laughed at. Dante's story is builded on acceptance; his music is the marriage of all parts. The man in Spain clashes the warring fragments of his world—laughter and pain—like cymbals.

Dissonance more frantic rings from "Faust."¹ Because he is a hero seeking a body—a whole world—for his will, Faust is at odds with his world and ends by leaving it. Unlike a Jew or a Greek, or a mediæval saint, he has no revelation to explore, divinely natural. He cannot argue fine points with Abelard, since the platform of faith is lacking; cannot weigh facts for truths with Archimedes, since factual reality has gone rotten. His will, dispossessed of body, vaults the world. Bursting with unhoused desire, he finds the Devil. He is the modern hero, the anarch of creative personal will at hopeless odds with dissolution.

Stendhal, who knew Napoleon, made perhaps the greatest record of that dusk of Europe, whose shadow is the example of that last European hero. Napoleon, the symbolic son of a lone, recalcitrant isle, was the unit of personal action in a severed world. He was the will that strives to bind all life in its own substanceless might, and fails. So Stendhal's hero in

¹The mediæval origin of "Faust" (like that of the volitionalism of Duns Scotus) does not gainsay the modernity of its development by Goethe. It was the dissident seed, that grew to be the expression of our dissident age.

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"Le Rouge et le Noir," the young peasant Julien Sorel. He is made isolate by intelligence and ambition. Pure of all extra-personal attachments, he plays the games of love and State and Church. His energy is a cancer in flaccid France. He has charm, courage, intellect, beauty. He has success. All that he needs to live, is contact with the world he lives in. But neither his provincial town nor Paris touches him. The women whom he wins for the furtherance of his career do not touch him. His will, being lordly, schemes lordship in the world. It cannot persevere, it starves to death, because it finds no world. Now he can love his woman, since she has become, in her sensory hold on him, a symbol of the error of his will-to-live. Ready to die, he can love. And he insists on death, turning his will at last to self-destruction. Death is the one positive act he can achieve. Julien's insistence that the gallows take him in punishment of a crime for which he could easily have found defense is not the usual suicide: it has naught to do with conscience. It is the one opportunity he finds of contact with the social body. It is perhaps the truest and most terrible death in literature. Earlier heroes found life deceptive and, loving life, sought truer life in death. Their faith gives substance to what they have denied. The flesh of St. Augustine, of Plotinus becomes real, because their spirit is real. But Julien's world is mere evanescence. It has not given him life; its one possible action is to die.

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Stendhal records the tragedy of chaos. Man to be co-ordinated must be a co-ordinate *part*. The serf of mediæval Europe, the beggar of Islam are more realised as men, than Julien or Napoleon. Serf and beggar are minute, but they are atoms in an organic whole. The "pure" individual, though he be Emperor of the French, is a phantom. The books of Don Quixote and Faust revealed a hero and a society, dispossessed each of the other, yet still each surviving. With Julien and Napoleon comes the death of the hero. In the work of the summarists that follow, we read the death of the world. The hero loses his will; the world loses its head. Hamlet, whose world was too much with him and who flinched before it, fathers the modern unheroic hero . . . Rolla, René, the Byronic Corsair, Adolph, Werther, down to the moon-calves and erotomaniacs and tea-sippers of London: homunculi whose lives are recollection, wistful or frantic, and whose world is a wasteland.

On the way is Balzac. His Comedy, being divine no longer, cannot be wholly human. With Saint Hilaire and Buffon as ideals, he paints a barbarous French fauna in which men and women move at the spur of sex and hunger. His world is a sensuous Inferno, topped by no Paradiso. Its reason, hence, is gone. His hell has forgotten it is damned. The dimension giving wholeness to the Dantean shambles was the divine consciousness that flooded it. Balzac's world is a gorgeous maze of voluptuousness and tor-

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ture, standing by itself in awful independence, as the *whole* of human action. His heroes are fragmentary wills so shrewd as to snatch another's bone within the scrimmage. And when Balzac's genius does throw out a dominant figure, he is Vautrin, a fellow of Mephisto, a man who can, like Faust, express his will only in war with a society too torn to use him.

In Balzac, spirit and consciousness of spirit are fitful fires within a firmament of darkness. Despite *Seraphita*, *Louis Lambert*, the *Lily in the Valley*, etc., light has no dimension in his work; it is not of the texture. His men and women are still massive configurations, moving in shadow, but abiding within the classic forms of Time and Space and State. There is still substance, though it be but flesh. In the *Comedy of Marcel Proust*, this substance has decayed; and Space and Time have become careful figments of a personal sense. Proust calls his work "The Quest of the Time that Is Lost." Heroes in Europe had quested for the Grail; striven to make of earth the Word of God. Or they had risen like Faust and *Don Quixote*, against a chaos they admitted, and formed their Order in themselves. Now the "hero" becomes a memory; the world a maze of recollection. An exquisite neurotic, after twenty years in the salons of France, goes weary to bed: cork-lines his room, bars the shutters, lights his candle: pens in vast sedentary volumes the invalid record of a contemporary Europe. He weaves, to be his world, a wavering tapes-

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stry. Moral and emotional conviction has no organic rôle in it: the continuity of sense, even of sentiment, as integral with deed, is gone. All that is left is a sporadic Time—a web through which the memory of sense wanders and fumbles: and an even more fitful ethical conviction in the author, carefully dissociated by him from any cogency in the world he is describing. This “hero,” memory, is not of the mind, but of the nerves: it is co-ordinate with no conscious world. Its scene must be actually spaced and graphed by the effort of the artist. By itself, it is an exhalation.

4

Every true artist performs a kindred work on the material which he selects. His material must be *sound* for his purpose. If his material be a rotten age, he must not denature it by denying that the age is rotten. If it be chaos, he must enact his order from it by the acceptance of chaos. The work of art is always a group of phenomena, made into a whole. It requires the principle of order. In a dissolving age, the artist therefore will be compelled ever to more personal, more violent efforts in order to effect his synthesis. Dante takes his Order from the world about him. Proust finds the nucleus for his in the memory of a recumbent man. This subtle unity must weave its order for him, from moral, spiritual, and social chaos. In the “Ulysses” of James Joyce, there is a similar chaos—a similar violence of effort to con-

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trol it. The directing force here is intellectual. It is the concept of a classic form, the concept of a day, the concept of a city.

"Ulysses" is a summary of Europe.¹ How that summary becomes art through permeation by the poet's self does not here concern us. I am not discussing art: I am using art, in a purpose of research. Here, then, in this book, in a form that recalls Homer, the Apocalypses of Alexandrian Jewry, the architectonic of Dante, Joyce presents the agony of a world: the chaos of the Mediterranean death. Rome and mediæval Britain, Hellene and Hebrew, Saxon liturgy, Hollywood movie captions, politics, whoredoms, pedantries, sea-winds, release of sex, liquor, journalism, defecation, the symbolatries of Jesuit, the day dreams of servant-girls, ecstasy, bile . . . come all together in a Dublin day. Explode. Disappear. Europe disappears. And there remains a woman lying in her bed at dawn, dreaming the dream of her womb. . . .

¹Thomas Mann's "Magic Mountain" places him among the fictional summarists: in his work, however, the æsthetic element is weaker than the conceptual—hence the almost classic surface of his materials. And in this group, as well, despite his philosophical disguise, belongs Oswald Spengler. "The Downfall of the West" is a poem in which the metaphysical and æsthetic notions of his day are the characters and the material. His "Cultures" are abstractions from which has been as carefully excised all that does not fit the plot, as from the characters of ancient comedy. Spengler's "Tendenz" is the apologia for his own inner sense of death. By ponderous and often magnificent proof that Cultures are insulate, fated to rise and fall by an inexorable Pattern, he "establishes" the hopeless death of his world to his own emotional satisfaction and to that of those (they are legion) who like him perfer the certainty of an end to the challenge of further spiritual growth. His book is a negative answer to all those good Europeans from Blake to Gide, who distill the hope of a new birth from the death about them. No wonder he was popular. . . .

V: THE GRAVE OF EUROPE

1

AMERICA, the New World, was a world born old. It was harmonious that the Spaniards, when they came, should have found Indian cultures past their prime, for they and their followers were fragments and were embers of a dying Europe. America, land of resurrection, was first of all a grave for the Mediterranean Culture. The exact motives of the pioneer cannot be isolated. In mind, spirit, social temper, he no longer fitted the ancient Body. With equal justice, the Body may be said to have broken out in forces dissonant with its wholeness, forces of ill health, forces articulated by the pioneer. He was a discharge from Europe. Dissident ere he sailed, his contingency on the old world that could no longer hold him is clear in the little breathless Europes which he set upon the American shores.

Here, long after their decay at home, survived traits of the old world. The Puritan village of New England retained from the crumbled synthesis of Rome the plan of a theocracy. In Massachusetts, man lived by the Law of the Lord: his conduct and his business were theoretically ruled by the interpreting Spirit. Pope Gregory VII, who projected the earth as the Body of Christ, could not have asked a more

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literal government by the Holy Ghost, although the astringent effects on mind and sense in Holy America might have disgusted him. The main difference was that the New England village stood alone; it had a monopoly of righteousness; in its sole hand the Lord was brandished; its neighbour down the turnpike was almost certain to be damned. In the South, relics of archaic worlds revived with a precision lost to Europe. From the plantation worked by slaves to county and to commonwealth, the hierarchy rose on steps of personal service. At the bottom were land and the serf: at the top were the patriarch and the chivalric idolatry of woman. Spanish America carried on the manorial paternalism of old Spain. Even the evangelical youth of Christendom—the day of the apostle sowing among the Gentiles—had its brief recapture when the Jesuits voyaged and builded from Uruguay to Quebec. America, once colonised, was at once archaic. Social, political, and religious customs escaped from the too organic change of Europe, found with us a final resting place where they might flare in lingering afterglow, before they flickered out forever. Even our languages were obsolescent. The locutions and songs of the era of Queen Anne were mummified in the Kentucky mountains; the Castilian of Felipe II merged with the Andalusian of the *conquistadores* to make an American Spanish that to-day is older than the present tongue of Spain.

A religion sick to death may strive to offset the

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dimming of its heart by peripheral action. It will turn proselytiser.¹ Thus decadent Judaism at Alexandria, converting the Gentile until with Paul the will to spread lopped the new branch from the bole. Thus, now, Catholicism, flaming across the Sea while its altars in Spain and France and Germany died down. The American works of Jesuits, of English Catholics and of their Protestant foes were really one: were actions of the decay of Christian Europe. And here again, the afterglow for a while outshone the mother fires. Sectarianism flourished in our land. Each particle of religion arrogated to itself the mission of the Whole. Atoms of dogma, each propelled by the whole weight of a tradition vast enough to sustain all Europe, went wild: went bounding and bursting over the wide land. Scripture was unearthed in Missouri; millennia were realised in farm communities of Ohio and New York. The Inquisition rose in South America with a compassionate ferocity that it had lost in Spain.

These transplanted forces lived their American hour with the hurry of age about to die; above all, with the fever of dissociation. The religious impulse in America was obsessive; which means that it was a normal impulse made abnormal by being freed from the balancing restraint of a part within a whole. In the hearty Christian Republic, revelation, dogma and salvation had been held to a Body that was social as

¹Of course, a young religion may proselytise as well.

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well as of the spirit. Now, each trait of the Synthesis burst forth alone, became a pseudo-whole: became, like any insane impulse, a law unto itself. This explains the intensity in American life of Christian forms which were already past their prime when they leaked out from Europe. There was superstition in Europe, and burning of witches, and mystical paranoia: but always there was a compensating context. In our land, the mania captured whole towns, and there was Salem; Calvinism was unimpeded so that it could starken into Jonathan Edwards; the social balance and the hold of roots were weak so that there arose phenomena like Joseph Smith and the Mormons.¹

2

The ideologies of our young America came to consist of parts of the organic Theory of Europe. There, reason, mystic faith, equalitarianism of the soul, authority and liberty of Value, had grown together in a cultural Form whose imperfections should not blind us to its grandiose purpose and to its lovely works. In the modern dissolution, the principles of faith, of reason, of equality, of liberty and value were rent asunder: asunder they boarded our Colonies: asunder worked their fragmentary message in the colonial mind.

America became a land of men possessed of little

¹An interesting book devoted to the description of these sects and groups is "The Stammering Century," by Gilbert Seldes.

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remnants of an ideal Whole: men who had faith in revelation and no reason: men who had faith in reason and no reasonable faith: men who made social democracy the whole of religion: men who worshipped Property alone as value. Each of these fragments, assuming the entire energy of Truth, grew domineering. The individualism and *laissez-faire* of England became an atomism. The equalitarianism of France (knitted intact there within a surviving social order) became the herd chaos of Jacksonian democracy. The sects of the dissolving European Church became the ambulant mad-houses that dotted the farm-land from Oneida to Salt Lake. The rationalism of European science, whose founders had openly declared allegiance to some mystic faith, shrank with us into an atheistical religion that stuck the universe within the pigeon-hole of its own logic. Finally, the bourgeois movements of industrialised Europe became the frantic property-ism of the American towns.

Europe had been builded on a synthesis of faith in revelation, faith in reason to interpret it; and in the dual mould of an equalitarianism of the spirit guarded and guided by a social order whose authority was not of wealth but of Value. As the Value in Europe's leaders dimmed, their body of visible substance became stressed. The king and prelate who had ruled because ideally they were keepers of God's truth, were forced at last to rule because they had the *force* of rulers. There arose a class, known as the bourgeoisie,

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which dispensed with an inane authority of Spirit, setting its rights squarely on the property which it possessed. The divine right of kings and churchmen shifted to their real power, wealth; and the middle class, which had the substance of gold without the shadow of spirit, moved to unseat them.

The brightest theatre of this Tournament became our land; its first great Joust was the American Revolution. Everywhere in Europe, Property, uncrowned, battled with Privilege, whose crown grew with the years more flimsy. Everywhere Property won. In America alone, its victory was so great that it stole not alone the power of Privilege but its crown and trappings, also. America, first of all, took the fragmented authority of mediæval Europe and set it squarely on the brow of Possession.¹ Once again, an idea sprung from Europe grew maniacal in America because it was alone.

3

Each part believed itself whole. Kindred or adjacent parts joined loosely to create a Section. And now, America was a crazy-quilt of sections. There was the section of Puritan New England, the section of more conservative New York and New Jersey, the feudal section of the South, the dissident section of

¹Even in such a Republic as that of the French, the trappings remain with the legally defunct nobility and with the intellectual heirs of the mediæval clerks. America made the first thoroughgoing aristocracy of unlanded money; *i. e.*, of fluid power.

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the southern mountains, the section of the Jacksonian Mississippi. Each section created a sectionalism of its very own: a rabid rationalisation of its specific interests; and the idea of each was a sprawling make-shift pieced from splintered Europe.

The afterglow in our land of these abscissive parts of the old world had a certain splendour. Feudalism in the South won a crepuscular day; the relics of architecture and of manners still extant attest it. In New England, the Puritans—an amalgam of the dissidence from the Catholic Whole of Germany, Britain, France—produced a twilight fever. There was Thoreau, whose withdrawal to Walden corresponds to Ossian and Rousseau. There was the community life (Brook Farm, for instance) to answer Fourier and Saint-Simon. Above all, there was Emerson, whose molecular, opalescent style was the symbol of the gathering of dusk. At dusk, favourite hour of the romantic painters, the lights of day prismatically break; so in Emerson, as in a mirror, there was caught a kaleidoscope of visions from Plato to Fichte. The Western Section had achieved an epic perhaps more real, since it was less contingent on old Europe, more in touch with aboriginal America. Its ideology—Jackson's equalitarianism—came into contact with the reserve of the Red Men, delved into the febrile dark of the American forest from which the Indian had builded his restraint. Such proto-mystic types as Daniel Boone became a seed in the American soil; a

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world really new moved blindly in them. Ere it dissolved, this Section created a beginning all our own, in the semi-conscious, aspirational Lincoln. In Lincoln, the acknowledged motives were of the old Americas which bred him; he tried to speak like his fathers. But these ideal elements implanted by the patrists of the Constitution became in him a deed as different from them as is the oak from the acorn. He was the incarnate prophecy of our transfiguration. And that he rose, while the "Union" of decayed Americas which he ostensibly battled to preserve boiled to its death, should be a mystic symbol and a proof of our national destiny of resurrection.

But the most eloquent and the most enduring of America's sectionalisms were those of political theory. Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Marshall, were men so brilliant and so well attuned to the colonial status, that they produced a political ideology of our own. They, too, were derivative not alone of Europe but of the Christian Republic which they had discarded. Political equalitarianism was a shred of the spiritual equalitarianism of mediæval Rome; even as the creed of Federalism was a caricature of the presbyterianism of Christ in his elect. The America these men expressed was in itself a Section—a part of the American Grave of the old world. But their energy survived them. Their political fragment of a Whole (in which statecraft had been inspirited by fusion with philosophy and religion) be-

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came, with their successors—like the religious fragments—an obsession. Politics, since religion was in a corner by itself, took the place of religion. The mechanics of American social action arrogated to itself the work of ethics and of Scripture. With energy dislocated from the Whole that no longer survived, politics undertook the creating of the American man. It became an absolute. And as the world in which it tried to function slipped more and more from being the world which had called it forth, the gestures of our politics grew more violent, its pretensions still more maniac. Politics and government at last were windy and noisome bodies without mind: they bespoke a world which was gone, they strove to act in a world not yet created.

Within each section there was strife. The religious and rationalist fanatics of Boston dwelt askance together. Farmers and town mechanics in New York spoke no concordant words. There was only a minimum of accommodation; only the fulsome rhetoric of the politician to make them at least drunk together. Between the great sectionalisms—the North, the South, the West—there was the hostility that turned to bloodshed.

4

It is an error to believe that in the Civil War the South lost and the North won. That Struggle was

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the death-spasm of all the Sections, of all our pasts. America emerged from it without sectionalisms, without organic past at all. It was swept to a flat atomic formlessness. The individuals survived, of course, carrying within them the old Americas. But the idea and the impulse which had begotten them were now gone. America spread like an unbounded water into an age without leaders and idea-less. Natural forces went on working: capitalist slavery, the momentum of industrial and territorial expansion. But they worked uncontrolled, they had no rationale. A Calhoun did not rise to make an ideal of the Machine; nor a Wendell Phillips to confute him; nor a Daniel Boone to light the far Frontier. We had politicians, and no statesmen; humorists, journalists, literary snobs, but no poets, no true men of letters.

The transplanted parts of Europe, having bloomed for a day, rotted all together. With the century's end, the deliquescence had advanced so far, that the particle was released—the ultimate human atom: the individual, anarchic man, moving alone in a herd through a bewilderment of motions.

He was an atom, a barbarian, because he was truly alone, truly without contact with an organic whole, both in himself and in his family and social being. Politician and pulpiteer mouthed memories for him. But their words appealed to a Body of ideas no longer in existence. The American of the emerging twentieth century was the loneliest man in the world: the

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world of his fathers had vanished, and no America had been created to replace it.

This American atom is an end of Europe. But he is *of* Europe no longer. Europe's running down could issue him only outside of Europe. He is the seed which has fallen to the ground. . . .

PART TWO:
FACTS

VI: THE AMERICAN JUNGLE

1

PICTURE some American wild. A torpid river creeps through mists laden with life. Trees tangle towards the sky. Between the air and the earth writhes an impenetrable maze of growing things. And in this fever-dark, beasts prowl, man preys. Man, too, is of the jungle. His ways are compact with the creatures whom he hunts. He is so close to this chaos that his flesh falls with the leaves to make the mould; nor is his spirit beyond it. He is not helpless. More than the man who follows careful paths, he must be deft in snaring food, patching his hut, warding off scorpion or foe. He knows the venomous plants and what is good to eat. Subtly and successfully as any beast, he stalks his quarry, tracks the water-hole, defends his wealth. He makes tools, he makes gods, he makes fire. He has names for everything that he encounters. Yet his excellence is ever in details; his conceptual knowledge of the world about him is but the exteriorisation of his personal sense. Not truly understanding, he has no control. He lacks method and ideas to lift him above the jungle and deliver it into his sovereignty. Famine, sudden death—the constants of his life—have made him clever, they have not made him wise.

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This jungle may have a past which is not jungle at all. In Yucatan, the trees root in Mayan temples, lizards are at home in prayer-bowls, man squats in ignorance upon the shards of cities. These fragments of a culture ethnically his do not make the wild less virgin, nor his savagery less complete. The spirit which endowed their forms has abandoned these cultural relics so that they remain, like any stones or trees, bare functions of man's barbarous desire—parts of a real jungle.

Not a particular kind of flora and fauna makes the jungle; not a particular colour of skin or bag of tricks makes the savage who lives within it. A jungle is simply a luxuriant external nature, uncontrolled and unregenerate by man. And savages are men, possibly bright and enterprising, who by no concepts transcending the immediate needs of sense have made this nature theirs; men who have not learned to assimilate their world together with their personal desires into some kind of Whole. The jungle can but perpetuate itself through ceaseless proliferation of chaotic power. But man may change it. He may conceive his jungle as material for creative articulation; he may emerge from the values of mere survival and exploitation into making his world the medium for that sense of truth and beauty which we have seen to be the stations on the way to Wholeness. Man, then, is no more the savage; and his jungle has become a country.

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If we Americans hold clear the cardinal features of jungle and of denizen within it, we find ourselves at home. In lieu of tarantulas and banyan trees, we have machines; in lieu of the action on us of storms and unguessed myriads of bacteria and insects, we have the intricate pull and stress of economic forces. And in lieu of ancient cities merged into tropic dust, we have the deposits of our old-world culture—the scattered and broken lay upon our lives of the ideas and forms which made America, at its birth, the grave of Europe. We, too, live beneath the whelm of what is *our* external nature; live on the defensive; live submissively beneath the play of forces alien to what we recognise as human and creative. We, too, have no highways in our wilderness, no signposts. And while the jungle lords it over us, we, too, real savages, respond with worship, model our divinities from its most looming and most cruel forms, adore its spawning and, immersed in the impervious Skein, are happy with scant survival.

The dominant growth in our jungle is of course the machine. Superficially at least, as it confronts us going about our world, the machine is not far in kind from the tumid monsters that clutter any jungle. You and I, for instance, did not make the motors which block our passage of Fifth Avenue. The workman did not make the factory in which he earns his living; nor did his child have a hand in the complex of mechanical contraptions which threshold and will

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regulate his world. The nature that dawns upon the modern child is one of myriad machines; the moral and æsthetic universe which he constructs for himself comes to him as the spawn of myriad machines. If he is reared on a farm, motor, telephone, radio, and word and picture of the press are as natural to him as tree or cow. And, of course, the nature of the city is mechanical altogether. Experientially, the world of the machine is exterior to the dweller like any nature. And like the savage, he must learn to live by rigorous adjustment. The coco palm can be manipulated to give food, so can the mill. Nature for the American is this iron chaos of life-providing, death-dealing, value-distilling forces.

If the American works in a factory or office his dependence on the machine-world is plain enough. But let him be clever or fortunate, so that he comes to own the factory. It still enslaves him. The labourer feeds his particular machine eight hours, the owner feeds it without end. Labourer and employer, whatever their political or economic ration, feed the machine without end. The worker, after hours, procures his nurture, his news, his entertainment, by feeding other machines. His every purchase feeds the dominant mechanics of production. And the owner no less, since his scheming to "get on" and his leisure for recuperation and his consciousness of "knowing how" revolve within the orbit of machine production, lives in this same contingent nature. His

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personal and political acts, even the worker's move toward economic revolution, cling to the same orbit—are like the often frantic efforts of the savage to get food and shelter from an untransfigured jungle. This is why there are no deep distinctions, no organic hierarchies in American life: why millionaire and mill-hand read the *Saturday Evening Post*, why the Broadway playhouse reproduces the provincial movie, why the shop-girl of Paterson or Pueblo follows the styles of the Park Avenue hostess, why labour leader and social rebel merely invert the lingo and the standards of the magnate.¹ They act and think alike because of the dominant single fact which all of them alike must face. One and all, humbly or grandiloquently, they survive by adjusting to a nature which they possess no concepts for controlling. If their job is to turn a spindle or to run a corporation of gigantic spindles—or to stop the spindle—still they must adjust to it. And if their need is to laugh or to pray, to advance their position or improve their minds, still they must win their ends in conformity to the producing, spawning will of a machine.

2

Before we go deeper into this living process which relates the American with his machine, let us make very clear how the machine differs from the other con-

¹The ideological attitude towards the machine of Judge Gary, president of a Steel Trust, of Gompers, president of a labor union and of the typical "Red" are indistinguishable.

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cepts carried westward by the breaking Whole of Europe.

The American jungle is rich in denatured elements of a transplanted world: it consists largely in those cultural deposits which justify our calling the "new world" the Grave of Europe. . . . We built our towns, our morals, our politics, our dogmas, our manners, our arts, from the relics of a world that is no longer dynamically ours, and that was not America, and that is dying. Almost everything which popularly goes for "culture" in our land is of this order of relic. The "art" of our museums, the "literature" of our women's clubs and magazines, the "rhetoric" of our statesmen, the "ideals" of our reformers, the "beauty" of our movies, the "problems" of our theatres, the "values" of our schools, the "rituals" of our churches—they are transplanted parts of a dead Whole. In that Whole which now no more contains us, they were valid. With us, within our world of the machine, they are, as *forms* of life, irrelevant; they are the rotted tissue of past worlds heaped on a jungle floor.¹ Far more than we suspect, we are like the Mayans who house their asses in priestly tombs. The design of an Attic temple makes a bank; the Gothic church façade fronts an apartment dwelling builded of steel girders; the imitation French chateau houses a packer of pork. The sacred strains of Bach become

¹The positive function of this decay—as *ferment*—will be considered later.

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an afternoon's amusement; the vision of Beethoven boosts a virtuoso. Ornament of Italian Renaissance jingles on the bosom of jazz. Altar-censers become ash-receivers. There is the same barbarous confusion when we revamp an ancient loyalty to God or King into a slogan for country, company or team; when we instruct our children to dance to May-Day music, having no village green nor a belief in May-Day. Or when, being plumbers and realtors, we form fraternities, having no brotherhood beyond that of wolves in a pack. Or when we join parties with antiquated standards. Or when we put ancient ethics into advertisements and modern movies into decrepit churches.

The machine alone among these legacies prospered, grew at last to be the determining presence of our nature. The reason is that the machine alone is a positive expression of the personal will freed from the dissolving synthesis of Europe. Our religions, our arts, our ideals of equality and freedom were all *fragmented* expressions, not of the personal will, but of that Whole. As that Whole dissolved, they dissolved.¹ But as the personal atom was more fully released, the machine which embodied it—which embodied personal will and wilful action—grew dominant.

We have, then, these two elements within the in-

¹Of course, the decay of all these legacies has not been uniform or synchronous. Our complex political heritage found a fresh constitutional shape, flourished a half century and then, in lieu of dissolving, grew fossilized so that the State whose ideal once led the world is now with minor exceptions the most rigid and obsolete. Our English tradition of letters flourished even longer, and persists palely to this day, like a pressed flower.

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finite foliations of our jungle: (1) the deposits of our own cultural pasts, formal and ideal; and (2) the machine which, conceptually also a heritage from Europe, expresses, unlike the others, our own immediate personal desires. We may now dispense with further similitudes between our nature and the primitive jungle, between our neo-primitive state as men drenched with the effluvia of past culture and the bare primitivism of the savage; and come to the more significant distinctions.

3

The clew to ourselves is not in the fact that we have motors instead of alligators: it is the *aggressiveness* of the elements of our world. The rotted culture beneath Yucatan is passive to the savage; our cultural remnants in church, in politics, in newsprint are active agents in the American soul. The jungle of the Amazonian is indifferent: man can *depend* on his jungle, because, with the exception of a few known dangers among the plants and brutes, it lets him be, offering more opportunities for life than traps for death. The primitive jungle feeds man: we feed our jungle. We literally are *the hunted*.

The mechanics of our subjection has become a commonplace of critical writing. We know that what we read, hear, see, what we laugh at, what moves us, what we are taught to love, no less than what we eat and where we sleep, depends on the gravitational

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power of the machine. We know that since communication, from rail to radio, has become mechanics, the communicated things which make us mentally and in spirit are functions of the same mechanical process. We know that from the machine's need to expand has grown our ideology of persuasion, our hideous myth of "progress" as an external matter: that man's life is becoming more and more the pitiful rationale of the machine. But where the deep Marxian has failed as crucially as the romantic follower of Rousseau or Tolstoy is in establishing the reason under the mechanics. . . .

In the break of the Mediterranean Culture, man, as we have seen, was released from the Whole in which he had his share and which had expressed and engaged him. Thus isolate, he reverted to that savagery which *spiritual* solitude in the world defines. For all his cat-like skill in tricking nature he was left alone with his anarchic "self," alone with the instincts of personal desire. This fragmentary "self" grew articulate through aggressive action, broke from the loosened fabric of social Europe, set up a world of its own. The American pioneer is the symbol of the process. Now, imagine this impulse of the fragmentary man—the will for personal aggrandisement—grown unimpeded. It has exteriorised itself from the whole of human life which, under the Christian synthesis, held men and God. It declares its autonomy, then its hegemony over all other impulse. Finally,

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it becomes *literally* embodied: it becomes a machine.

Our jungle is a nature of machines. *We are the hunted in our jungle, because this world of ours is the exteriorisation of our own desire. Our nature is aggressive, because it is the embodied action of our aggressive will. We are subject to this jungle, we adore it and we feed it with our lives, because it is quite literally ourselves.*

Our outer world is, then, the effect embodied of what has taken place in typical man released from the Synthesis of western Europe. The true seat of the jungle is within. The core of the *fact* in which we live is an *ideal* state.

VII: THE REIGN OF POWER

1

It is not accidental that Nietzsche, who was a child of Europe's chaos and who refused all unity to life, deified the will-to-Power. Power is the god of the one who accepts only himself. Power is the imposition of the one upon the external world. In the polity of Power, what counts is the one: what must survive is the same one. All outside this one must submit or be destroyed. Power is the expression of the brute, of the savage, of the child—of any being whose self-awareness has not spread beyond the majesty of personal will. Wherever energy remains in the stage of *individual* enhancement, it becomes Power. The genesis of Power, therefore, being the denial or unawareness of wholes beyond this individual enhancement, is chaos; and the production of Power is more chaos. For Power refuses to die within some synthesis greater than itself. A mass of power-persons cannot integrate, can form no organ or *true* society: they make the herd whose sum is the cumulation of self-assertive atoms. But the creative act, upon whatever plane, is the fusion of the one with another one; so that what was two becomes a one which was not there before and which transcends the individual ones that made it. The name of this creative act is Love.

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Sexual, intellectual, social, æsthetic, mystic—wherever a union is created between two or many, so that now there is one, you have Love. Love, then, is the antithesis of Power. It may be more powerful than Power, but it is not Power.

My contrasting definitions of Power and Love are justified by the common experience of our life. The child begins with the assertion of his naked ego: he is a power-person; *and he must be*, ere he be ripe for love. Unless Love transfigure his ego, he will, however, remain a power-person: spiritually immature, creatively unproductive. *But he can not achieve the stage of Love, without going through the stage of Power.* The natural infancy of human spirit is an experience of Power; by means of Power this spirit is cultivated and developed. Only the ego which is strong, self-assertive, prone to Power, is ripe for Love. Love is no submergence of a weak personal will in others: it is the masterful, conscious fusion of the strong ego with life. The creative act whereby a whole is born can not be brought about without strong integers. That is why the cult of Power must precede the fruition of Love, in both individual and race. And that is why virile Christianity professed that the strong sinner who repents is closer to salvation than the weak creature who has lived no life of Power. The will of the sinner, having grown great, is ready for the crucifixion whereby it will be reborn: it is at least a candidate for Love.

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The peoples of early Europe were barbarous power-persons, virile egos. The Christian mystery transfigured them (at least in theory) from Power to Love. But as the strength of the Christian mystery receded, the original factor—the Power ego—was re-asserted. Power, the natural state of the barbarous European youth, is also the condition of decline. Men when they are young aspire from Power towards Love: when they are old or weary, they fall back once more from Love to Power. Thus, qualitatively, in the race, youth and age meet each other.

The reign of Power in America is therefore not mysterious. The synthesis of Europe was, at least ideally, and for all its flaws, a true creation: Love—the Love called Christian—went into its making. Like all bodies, it at last dissolved. We have seen how the atomic fragments released by its dissolution flowed to the Atlantic; how American sections for a while heroically held against the urge of deliquescence, and at last went down in what we call the Civil War. All that remained, to the released American atom, was his own atomic self-expression, which is Power.

If, then, America's true outset was a manifest of Power, this was but the heritage of birth, the way of any child. And if America's activity put forth a jungle of Power, this too was as it must be. The barbarism we have pictured as American life within our Power-nature, is not a reproach; it is but a beginning.

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We have defined this barbarism as the state in which man accepts an untransfigured nature—within him and without—and adjusts to it and finds his values in it. Now, we may add to our definition: Barbarism lives on the plane of Power; and it is precisely in consequence of this that barbarous man is spiritually alone, forming no integral society but a pack or a herd, and that nature, although he adjusts to it perhaps with consummate skill, remains ideally external, humanly *uncreated*—remains a jungle.

2

Like the savage in his forest, the American worships himself in what is manifest about him. Tree, sun, spring, the procreative force—or the machine, big buildings, success: they are values passively found within, and put upon the outer world in animistic fashion. The nature of industrialism is the extension of the embodiments of Power. As with the machine, so the State, the corporation, the financially and socially vested institution, even the party and the club become power-objects and approach the machine in function. The American, submitting to his nature, through it accepts and worships his own Power.

Now, power in a machine is a good thing. The machine is a lone body: all it can do is to exert itself externally without change of its “self” in a higher fusion; and keep this up over and over, until it wears away and is ready for the scrap-heap. In the ma-

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chine, we can saliently observe the way of Power—its efficiency, its drastic limitations. And in the often unconscious use of Power—of machine-methods, where they cannot apply, we may begin to observe the tragic dangers in American life.

America is a herd longing to become a true society—frantically longing. It is a living plasm, a potential Whole, and it must reach its organic health or rot and die. It strives to achieve this goal of Unity, which is the fruit of Love, by exercise of Power. It legislates, it organises, it marshals loyalty into institutions which, serving specific ends, are mere machines. It endeavours, that is, to *force* our birth and our growth. Thus, we enact laws regulating morals; thus gather in Rotary Clubs and Ku Klux Klans. Our purpose is good, it is to create a spiritual active Whole from the chaos which we feel within us. But since the means we use is Power—child of chaos—we perpetuate our chaos. Power can render homogeneous, for its way is to destroy or cause to submit what differs from it. But uniformity is the contrary of integration. Stirring to be born, we apply Power and bring death; restless in our herd-state, we force Power on the herd and confirm it. . . .

3

Power renders servile. The man who accepts the primacy of Power is empowered by personal desire. He has crucified the sense of the Whole within him,

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which acts through Love. He is the victim of his barbarous impulse to make the world his victim. Such a man, meeting, as all men must, a greater power than his own, is soon enslaved by it. He has succumbed to Power in himself, what virtue has he to avoid subjection to the same force in mightier degree? If he falls before no stronger person, he will succumb to the mass-power—to the abstract idea of Power. He will be servile before some external show vaster than what he values in himself. He will be the American, indeed: nervous, restless, comfortable only as he basks completely in the power of the mob about him. He will distrust whatever impulse in himself cannot immediately be coined in power; he will despise minorities, both in his soul and in his social body; and—if they threaten to discomfit him—he will use violence to suppress them. He will be, that is, a “democrat”: and having convinced himself that slavery to Power is good if he calls the Power his, he will proceed to deem himself a free man.

The reign of Power means a mass of men who have lost freedom and creativity. For the free man is he who has come through the personal (infantile) experience of Power, and the personal need for Power, thereby winning the strength of knowledge that he is part in a Whole: and the creative man is he who understands that the personal will must become a factor in a union that transcends it. In a reign of Power, there is only Power. There will be powerful build-

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ings, powerful machines, powerful parties, powerful banks, powerful prisons—and depleted men.

4

This becomes still more clear when we consider that, by definition, the field of Power is external to the man who wields it. Energy is harnessed by Power only to be led into extrinsic fields. Power does not fuse the world of nature into union with the self; for this is the activity of Love. It subdues, and passes on. The realm of Power is a constantly retreating surface of possibilities not yet conquered. Power lives on a frontier. The frontier moves with it; its war-cry is that kind of "progress" which has no present, which has but an unreal "future." Nor does Power act within the self from which it issues. It accepts that self, indulgently. It is the immediate exteriorisation of personal impulse. The man of Power has begun by docilely admitting at its own value his desire to possess the world. He has not mastered himself: indeed, the abdication of self-mastery is the price he pays for the career of Power. This man is not self-contained, not self-evolved, not moving towards growth, since his action is on an illusory frontier of life forevermore outside him.

It follows that Power renders him who wields it passive. It is true that American life is a constant agitation, a violent moving hither and beyond, in which the country strives to emulate the city. But

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motion may be proof of passiveness. Take a squirrel in a treadmill. So long as it runs with the running plane that binds it, though it wear itself out with movement, it is passive. To be truly active, the squirrel would have to endeavour to stand still. It might stop the treadmill, then, and get away. The treadmill of Power is the dominating impulse to gain Power. The whole man is disengaged, save as the lust of Power can employ him: all that is contemplative, creative, religious in him becomes inert.

In our land, this paradox of Power is concrete. Power has spread the machine; the machine acts and man is passive. He wants to move quicker than legs can move him. He gets into a machine which moves him, and so far as moving is concerned he is passive. He wants to have music quicker than the slow process of learning to make music. (Speed is the disease of Power which, having no present, feverishly strives to hurry to the future.) The machine "gives" him music; and in consequence he is exiled from the experience of music.¹ A concatenation of machines, giving him news, motion, entertainment, art and sport progressively renders him inert, and deprives him of

¹Art cannot become a language, hence an experience, unless it is practised. To the man who plays, a mechanical reproduction of music may mean much, since he already has the experience to assimilate it. But where reproduction becomes the norm, the few music-makers will grow more isolate and sterile, and the ability to experience music will disappear. The same is true with cinema, dance, drama and even sport. Only when the theatre, for instance, is an ennobled stylisation of common social practice (as it was in Athens where it followed the rites and in Mediæval Europe where it dwelt within the church) can it become a deep experience for the onlooker.

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the experience which these should give him. For none of these is real, save in the degree that it *engages* him. News which should expand becomes inane; entertainment which should recreate becomes a drug; motion which should bring experience becomes escape; art becomes a mechanical mockery of life. . . .

Since the cult of Power renders passive and depletes man's energy from his creative centre, it becomes evident that the reign of Power changes nothing. True change means creation, and Power, since it never can surpass itself, never can create. The sort of "change" which we observe in the American world—kaleidoscope of styles and forms and fads flashed on the eye by newspaper and commerce—is typified by the electric sign on Broadway. We know that its glittering variance is an illusion. The sign is a stiff and stationary structure; the sense of change derived from the lighting and dimming of bulbs is but a surface calling of attention from one part of the sign-board to another. With the right perspective we should know that the "advance" of our politics, our literature, our arts, our mechanical "progress" is a similar delusion. Change in America is laborious and secret; it persists against the obdurate will of those very institutions which constantly mouth "progress." The reign of Power threatens to make us the changeless slough of the world.

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5

Albert Einstein on his visit to New York exclaimed¹ with questioning surprise: "This seems to be a land of only two dimensions!" Einstein is a prophet whose symbology is physics. In his terms, he had perceived the nature of a society of Power. Such a world has only surfaces; its energy goes into the continuous making of frontiers of action, never deepening to a "third dimension" what it has acquired. The observer knows how true this is: of our thought, of our emotional play, of our politics, of our arts. The architecture of New York is flat; it has no depth, and in consequence it strikes the intelligent eye as flimsy and unreal. It may stand for the Power which can project manifolds of two dimensions, but not create the depth in which real life begins: the "third dimension" that another idiom calls "consciousness" or "spirit." And here again, the machine bears witness. However intricate, the machine can be only a thing of surfaces.² It is an analytical concoction. This means that it cannot grow beyond the actual parts which make it. Creation is synthetic. A human body, for example, is *more* than the sum of the chemicals that form it. This *more* is the synthesis which, on whatever plane, we may call life. It is the fruit of Love. It alone can be the aim of creative man's devotion.

In a true society, Love finds its natural career.

¹In personal conversation with the author.

²Its "third dimension," as I have explained, must be the use to which it is put by the creative spirit.

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Such a society is a nubile, intricately living Whole with which the individual wills may marry through social, political, æsthetic and religious action. With us, who are a herd (under a carapace of uniforming Power), the impulse to create is disembodied. It perseveres, it has no world to live in. It is in constant danger either of evaporation or of corruption by Power. Yet America longs for what it appears to reject. Power, which by itself can but perpetuate its sterile sway, needs to be overcome by Love.

VIII: GODS AND CULTS OF POWER

1

THE American gods of Power have a temple. It is the best we can show as formal articulation of what we are and what we love. We call it the Skyscraper. Fifty stories heaped alike one atop another express a herd; even as the Romanesque bespoke an integrating, the Gothic an integrated, the Renaissance Baroque a disintegrating people. We are a mass rigidly compressed into a simple structure; our rank is equalitarian, our aim is eminence, our dynamics is addition,¹ our clearest value is the power of the bulk of ourselves. So the house that stands for us has immensity for its aim, and for its method the monotonous piling of sameness upon sameness.²

When the skyscraper aspires beyond these real traits, it becomes a hypocrite. The will to beauty begets the archæological lies that our ambitious architects smear over our steel structures. The skyscraper

¹Note the unique importance which all American communities attach to growth in population.

²Luc Durtain in his recent volume of tales about American life entitled "Quarantième Etage" makes an analogy between the skyscraper and the totem-pole. . . . It should be noted that this "sameness upon sameness" is already being modified by the "set-back" and terracing of our high buildings and by such contrivances as the pent-house. Our houses are no longer "packing boxes set on end, as if we had just arrived from Europe." The fact that problems of light and street-space have consciously brought about these variations does not destroy their symbolic proof that we are beginning to emerge from our chaos. A spiritual symbol is of value only as it expresses some physical (economic) fact.

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is a simple frame in which stones are laid like stuffing; as befits a false democracy the individual stones lack structural importance. In the Gothic, the stress of every separate block upholds the vault: each stone like each soul is indispensable. Yet it is the booty of such contrasting forms that one finds pilfered and stuck about our buildings. Thus, the crass splendour of the American cliff-dwelling is concealed beneath some wistful need of the American soul.

In most rituals of our gods of Power, you will find a like hypocrisy. And in most commentaries on our way of life, one of two equal errors: either the pretense is taken at its face value, or it is sneered at. The truth is in neither camp. We are not a cultural people, nor are we primitives. We are neo-primitives. The memory of our cultural past colours our quest of values beyond those which our actual lives distil. The dissolution of the Mediterranean Whole lives in us, not as mere decay, but as *ferment*. This ferment it is which stirs us into make-believes of "truth" and "beauty." Our hypocrisy is like the normal process of the child, aping the man. Without it, we should be hopeless.

A realtor blowing "service" into inane speculations, Rotarians shouting brotherhood at lunch-time, Henry Ford justifying his flivver on the ground that it made better roads, the ad writer prating of æsthetics, the politician mouthing God—are signs not of mere emptiness, but of an emptiness that would be full. Our

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business seems to provide no adequate flesh for our ideals, hence the abyss between what we do and what we say we are doing. But merely to strip our acts of the gorgeous names we call them is as sterile as to take the names for granted. The skyscraper may express the herd, but the motifs on its façade filched from Chartres or Gizeh express the need of the herd to be a herd no longer.

Let us not forget this as we proceed in our scrutiny of American life. *The pretense is quite as real as the fact.* Pretense is misplaced desire. It may be dynamic (consider the boy who plays the man); to the psychologist it is always of importance. The American lives in a pantheon of Power; but he has filled his world with highfalutin phrases that prove how intolerable to himself his world must be. He is something better than an honest savage: he is a savage in transition. But the problem is hard; transition is a dangerous age. Being imaginative and having behind him a vast lineage of dualistic thought, the American may render bearable his intolerable world, not by transfiguring it, but by perfecting an anæsthetic system of substitutes to hide it. If so, his world will not grow; and he eventually, lost in his anæsthesia, will perish. For all the "good" lies cannot alter an essential want of opportunities for creative living. The way out is severely to dissociate our fact from our pretense: to determine the values that reside in both, and to bring *these* together.

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2

In this spirit, we isolate the Power-fact in a few of our pretentious practices and cults:

Success: to Americans, success is an exercise of power visible to the world. If some one else can't see it, it is not success. The *end* of riches, popularity, public repute, not their content, makes success. This means that American success is a surface: what lies behind that surface may be bad or good or even noble: it is irrelevant to success.

The Machine: our household idol, as we have found, because it supplies the explicit objective for the American's self-adoration. Creature of his need of power action, it sensuously displays the means of his own ideal of behaviour. He loves it autoerotically. Its body of surfaces must shine, as if it were the body of the beloved. It must gleam with oil as with ointment, glide silently as in soft raiment. Much of the male American's emotion (which American women need to become women) goes to the machine.

Efficiency and Service: the machine-ideal in these cults is clear in that their "values" are conceived as working externally and for some particular end related to success. No American is "efficient" because of work done within himself or within others: nor is he "of service" because he raises the level of mankind. "Service" is a particularly hideous cult, because it is the bare hypocrisy of Power.

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The Corporation: an idol which combines the values of success and the machine. The individual is held within an organisation that approaches the machine in action and that stands for success. The individual may or may not share in the material profits, he does share in the atmosphere of power. His loyalty is commanded to the company's success, so that he vicariously lives success. This sharing is called "service." Note that the business of the corporation is not really a value to him: it does not, like a church, subsist on his own spiritual increase or salvation. The corporation feeds him and physically "protects" him. But he would be the first to deny that these were ends proportionate with such terms as loyalty and service. The organisation is a fictitious receptacle for his devotion as a social, even religious being; and its true function is just this: to enable him, lacking a divine object, to "serve"; lacking a love object, to be loyal. This is possible, only because of the individual's unconscious cult of power and love of the machine as an instrument of power. He adores the corporation for what it is, believing it to be what he adores. In this strange ritual, there is no true difference between employer and employee. They receive money for their job in varying degree, but both bring to it a cult that has no relevance to money. The corporation is an irrational means for worship to president and office-boy alike: both need it, both lack a better. Therefore, the magnate who at the company's annual love-feast

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orates to his employees of the "common cause" is telling the truth despite himself. What capitalist and "wage slave" share in the corporation is far deeper than the discrepancy of what they earn.¹

The Fraternal Organisation: an essential analogue of the commercial company, as are the Boy Scout movement and the State itself, in so far as these also command loyalty beyond their possible intrinsic spiritual content.

Popular Literature and Art: in no country is there more rife devotion, than in ours, to the arts and to their makers. The full reason for this will become more clear when we consider the American cult of comfort, as a corollary of the cult of Power. Here it is to be observed that our arts appeal in the extent that they approach the nature of the machine, and indoctrinate success. The vogue of the radio is almost independent of what comes over the air. The values to the "fan" of radio-art are: (1) the mechanism that does the work, (2) the thrill of success in getting the connection and (3) gregarious satisfaction in the contact with the body and heads of the herd. The American short-story and motion-picture must be mechanical in their precision; originality and truth are readily sacrificed to the urgency of the *formula*. Such art may even be endlessly repetitious without suffering in approval, since its value is its mechanical

¹When our communists and socialists, with many of whose aims I am in profound sympathy, learn such truths as this, there will be more cogency to the American revolutionary movement.

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form. What this form conveys is of course a vicarious success. American art is a "success-machine." The message, the fate of the characters, the atmosphere of the artist must all mechanically converge to this indoctrination. Efficiency, speed, regularity, become habiliments of an art whose end is to enhance the sense of Power. It need not be pointed out how antithetical all this is to the true æsthetic function.

Sport: also a combination cult of the machine and success. Man individually or in a team is organised mechanically for a success which is the spectacular specific display of Power. Note that American athletics *as a cult* is intrinsically empty. It is not practised (despite the inherited palaver) for the joy of exercise, for physical improvement, as service to a physical god, *or even as the expression of rivalry*. It is watched distantly from a vast stadium in the depths of which the athletes shrink to the size of symbols: or it is read about: or it is followed on the radio and ticker. It has no inner kinship with Greek gymnastics, the Corybantic dance, or the English game. For the sportsman, the end is notoriety and money: for the public, it is the thrill of mechanical perfection, violence, hero-worship, vicarious power.

Politics: the analogy between our politics and professional baseball is almost perfect. In both, there are numberless bush-leagues—local bodies which play the game for town and county. Above are the minor leagues—state clubs which feed the Majors. In both,

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participate a class of specialists and professionals, who, beyond their skill in their game, are in no direct touch with American life; who seal the game to themselves and who serve chiefly as symbols for the rivalries and passions of a dispossessed public. Both politics and baseball are machines. Of course, the politician who holds office fulfils certain organisational functions, so that his utility is different from the sportsman's. Such offices, however, could be filled far better by technicians. The higher political offices are necessary for American life, for the same reason that such phenomena as Babe Ruth are necessary: as means of vicarious Power. The politician is in the game for Power; and the public wants him to play big and to look big, in order to feel big through him.

Crime: a cult so potent and popular that it outdoes politics and vies with sport in its rank in the public prints. Crime is an expression of Power peculiarly appealing, because it is violent, spectacular, more sportsmanlike than sport, and—in America—almost as successful. It touches the heart of the American atom, who, being compressed into the herd by economy, law and habit, conceives of liberty as an explosion. The American is not intellectual enough to know of revolution or of ideal rebellion. Crime is more within his means: it is the wistful ethos of American self-assertion. Of course, this idolatry cannot be admitted in a jungle so thick with moral relics. So the crowd creates a huge professional class of criminals

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—entertainers who grow yearly more self-conscious of their “mission.” To co-operate with them in their trials and exploits there is an almost equally large group of crime-reporters. Both news accounts of actual trials and fiction about crime conform with our mechanical ideal of art. The process of trial law is a machine, and the good detective tale is a machine as well. The extent to which we rationalise the cult of Crime was revealed to me recently in the editorial of a detective magazine. It recommended that schools subscribe to it on the ground that children, taught by reading its tales how crimes are committed, would be more likely to “go straight.”

Sex: as a cult, like that of sport and crime, it is vicarious. It has naught to do with the clean, open ecstasy of sexual play. It flourishes among the masses in whom economic pressure and regimentation of ideas have destroyed that liberty of thought and movement without which sex play is as impossible as singing without air. Its stuffy temple is the tabloid, the movie, or the Broadway show. It is not, in the mind of its adherents, distinguished from crime; and this puts the proper mark on it. America regards sex, as it does crime, as an explosion. (There is, however, a healthy reaction throughout the land against this blear-eyed vicarious cult of Sex, on the part of the flapper and her boy. We shall come to that when we discuss the inspiriting, instinctive freedom of the young American woman.)

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Legislation: a popular cult. Our faith in statutes as an expression of social virtue reveals the classic lineaments of Power: externality, force, display. A law, making men pure, is visible to all, is applicable from the outside, is hence satisfactory in creating that surface of purity which Power alone discerns. Any statute, moreover, is a power-action, and any vice is a pretext for Power to suppress it. Whether such legislation renders pure is, of course, a nugatory matter.

Humanitarianism, Official Charity, etc: these with us are cults of Power, and peculiarly vicious. In no other country are they made so much of. They are parasites of the cult of Success. Organised charity is the spectacular means of keeping your less fortunate neighbour in your power, and your conscience in trim. To practise it in Drives and "Federations" is an oblique way of placarding your (financial) goodness. Humanitarianism is a reverse of humanism. It connotes a complacent condescension to your fellows: you wish men well (so long as they do not outstrip you). But humanism wishes men well, only in so far as they aspire to an exalted standard. In a herd without hierarchic values, all men as potential rivals are turned against all men. The salve of this coarse obsession is humanitarianism. If you are so fortunate as to beat your neighbour, publicly you shake his hand: if you are beaten, you disguise the fact by shaking his hand still harder. This is the essence of the

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thing. It will go any length—within the realm of gesture. A recent example is the “good-will” flight of Colonel Lindbergh to Latin-American lands which we are in the process of devouring.

Puritanism: the Puritan’s metamorphosis in American life from religiosity to acquisition, and his relation with pioneer ideals, have received much notice in our critical letters.¹ But we have overlooked the danger of associating historic Puritanism with the force that takes this name to-day. Our Puritanism is very distinct, not alone from that of Milton, of Roger Williams, of Jonathan Edwards, but as well from that which inspired Mormonism and Abolition. Mr. Irving Babbitt’s definition of Puritanism as “the inner check upon the expansion of natural impulse” says too little and too much. Too little, because it does not give the motives that bring about this check; too much, because it does not allow for the natural impulse of acquisition and of Power, in favour of which Puritanism merely checked other, to it less important, natural desires. Puritanism as an ideal gave no single word on slavery, liquor, sex, religious or political dogma. There were Puritans who drank good liquor, preached free love, denied the dogmatic authority even of their private preachers, despised property, believed in communism, etc. The historic motive

¹See the works of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, my “Our America,” Lewis Mumford’s “The Golden Day,” André Siegfried’s “Les Etats-Unis d’Aujourd’hui,” and the little known, important volume of William Carlos Williams, “In the American Grain.”

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behind the Puritans' behaviour had a mystical and economic element: the post-mediaeval attitude towards religion as an experience *adumbrating from the personal will*, and their rationalisation, through Scripture, of their own rise as a Chosen People within the "Egypt" whose economic feudal fabric oppressed them. This economic rationalisation shifted in America to the pioneers' need of eschewing certain enjoyments in order to conquer the wilds. Finally, this motive evaporated altogether, as did the attitude towards Scripture from which they built their theocratic notions. What remained was the bare conditioned Puritan behaviour: the will-to-power through insistence on personal regulation. But since the religious values of Puritanism were gone, the tendency of this power-expression was to become exclusively external. Puritan self-rule for ideal ends turned into rule of "the other fellow," still along moral lines, for sheer purposes of power. Puritanism's past of social antagonism, together with its dualistic philosophy of good and bad conditioned it, so that it still sees the world as a divided camp with itself (the good) in the minority. Whatever the numerical fact, modern Puritanism must behave as if it were on the defensive against odds. In this way, it rationalises its need of saying No. And it must say No, since it no longer has any positive values to say Yea to. There is in Tennessee no intellectual horror of Darwin; the farmer wives of Kansas have no articulate theory

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about alcohol and cigarettes; nor do the Nordics of Vermont *think* themselves superior to the Italians. But evolution, wine and Latin blood are badges of opposing camps. "All Power to us. Suppress 'em!"

Spiritualism, Christian Science, etc.: these are offshoots of the old Puritanism which still had ideal values, modern cults in which the modern habit of Puritan negation takes an ideal form. Spiritualism tends to deny the reality of a painful terrestrial life. It is a demon worship. The mediums are magicians who have a certain power over departed spirits, and deflect this power for the usually material benefit of the believers. Christian Science is no less of a power-plant. From dimly surviving strains of Platonism, neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, Manicheism, it concocts a means of overcoming pain and evil by denying them. That alone is real, it says, which benefits *you*. To the childish power principle, everything is sacrificed *which hurts*. These are significant ideal symptoms of the social disease of Power.

Theosophy, etc.: as the Mediterranean dogmas grow worn with use, the peace and power hungering soul looks farther afield. America, moving west, comes to the east. So India sends patches of her glorious truth to be woven into modern comforters. The weak soul which cannot master the chaos of our world will be tempted to deny it altogether. If one way is too close, in its associations, to the world of our fathers, another—remoter, more esoteric, must

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be found. Paths and Methods are offered, with precise specifications, for reaching Truth. And Truth means Success, if not here, then hereafter. The mental and human science of the East is dogmatised into mechanical salvation. Breathe *thus*, think *so*—and you will outstrip mankind in the race to Glory or Nirvana. Thus Hinduism is bereft of its organic meanings, indissoluble with Indian social and psychic forms; and supplies power systems for impotent Americans. Many of our eastern cults are for dull people; but not all.

Psychoanalysis: the empiric method and hypotheses of Freud are probably as important to psychology as were the analogous geneticisms of Darwin and Marx to biology and economics. To the growth of this discipline, America has contributed very little;¹ in the extent that it has been practised here by competent analysts for therapeutic ends, it does not concern us. But small intellectual groups have turned the technics of Vienna and Zurich into a cult. This has been done by setting up the “causes” “under” our consciousness as god, the jargon that describes these “causes” as the one critical language, and the search of these “causes” in oneself as the Way of life. The empiric theory is, that the neurotic should “solve” his problem in the hermetic symbol-relation with the analyst, in order to be able to go forth better equipped

¹This was written before the publication of Dr. Trigant Burrow's “The Social Basis of Consciousness”—a work of supreme importance.

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to solve it in real life. What actually happens is that the patient is placed in an infantile relationship under some single individual who lacks even the vicarious wisdom of a church or a race tradition to make him worthy. This relation, called "transference," reveals the Power element, in the peculiarly dangerous disguise of science. The victim who seeks Power always falls into the power of another. Of course, in cure of a disease, such a power relationship with a physician is temporarily needed—even as a man may have to put himself into the power of a surgeon. As a means of "learning to live," of solving problems of spiritual adjustment, psychoanalysis is a menace—a short-cut not to life, but to life's avoidance. Often this practice of self-analysis is found more desirable than actual living and permanently replaces it; the relation with the analyst drains the need of relations with the rough-and-tumble world. When this is the effect, psychoanalysis is a full-fledged power-cult; and as such it has been rife with a peculiarly sensitive and intellectual class of American woman. It is worthy of mention here, because it shows how the *élite* parallel the way of the less sophisticate with their ancient doctrines, by twisting modern theories into means of Power.

3

Our list need not be extended. These practices, devotions, cults of Power, have a common trait: they

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are not what they seem, so that we bring to them a hope which they do not fulfil. Our success does not make happy, our loyalty to State or Corporation does not enlarge, our cult of sport does not invigorate, our cult of crime does not release; our education does not educate, our politicians do not govern, our arts do not recreate, our beauty does not nourish, our religions do not make whole. Yet it is our energy that feeds these practices and cults. With our spirit, we give them life and blood, in order that they should fulfil us. *And they do not touch us.*

IX: "LET'S BE COMFORTABLE"

1

THE store set by comfort in America brings to mind the pioneer. Having spent his day and his life at grips with an uncomfortable world, he lapses at the twilight of violence into as violent a lust for ease. He has trekked a wilderness and shrewdly wrung from it farmland and gold. He is dog-tired. The tough way has hardened yet exacerbated him. It has used his sensibilities, not fed them. Having no intrinsic value in his labour, save its continuance, and hence no comfort in it, he looks on comfort as a thing apart; yet since his labour has conditioned nerve and mind, comfort to touch him must be at the same pitch. He loafs, drinks, gambles, in converse mood from that in which he sweated in the saddle; but with the same intensity, the same obsession. He has strained hard in work, now he collapses hard in ease. The attitude of the man deeply has not altered. Hard liquor after hard labour; rough bouts of sex after his warfare with the elements, and heavy sleep to top the torpor of the empty march. The Puritan, also, with his wilful hoist into those ascetic rigours which so well met the pioneer's necessity before his world, provides a clew to the American lust for comfort. . . . But we are neither Puritans nor pioneers. The historic

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analogue would serve no understanding, did not the forces that made the first Americans what they were, make us.

We might say that the early American had a set of ideals and an axe; he had use for the axe and none for the ideals. But the axe, demanding ever to be used, gave naught to the user, of inherent value: therefore, it enervated and it tired: therefore the user of the axe, losing the value of his displaced ideals and through his present life achieving none beside them, prized the most positive result of his fatigue—which is the need for comfort. Inherent in any life of Power is the cult of comfort.

Long since, then, the stage was set for this primacy of comfort as a value. It rose parallel with the rise of the bourgeoisie whose domain was not authority, but Power. However, even to-day in Europe, the aristocracies of land and church have not quite lost their place as value-makers, so that the sheerness of comfort as an end has been resisted by old surviving values. In America alone, the reign of Power being perfect, the cult of comfort grew complete.

The settlers came, ignoring or despising comfort as an intrinsic value, for they were fresh from urban fields and cities. They were a civilised folk, faced with a jungle. They were a people who had lost their inner peace (else they had never come); exiled from spiritual House, bitten with creeds that goaded them to extremities of intolerant behaviour, or in revolt

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against laws and forms of Europe which had injured them. But they were possessed by the need of dogmatising their escape into a simulacrum of the ideal Whole they had lost and nostalgically longed for. They were above all unconscious of why, truly, they had come; of what, really, they desired: hence they were prodded and victimised by the inner truths and outer circumstances of their life. In temperament and spirit they lacked comfort. They found, moreover, an uncomfortable country, a world of marshes, forests, mountains. Famine and war stalked the stockades; winter and summer for the most part were more violent than they had been in western Europe. The Americans were, in brief, a people comfortless—and were lacking in any cogent value to heal their disarray beyond the will to be comfortless no longer. Genetically and environmentally, they were ripe for the cruel paradox that took them.

In physics, we learn, the energy of motion has the dominant trend to become heat. This is called “entropy.” In man, the energy of Power flows into the need of comfort. This psychologic “entropy” may not be reversed. Power with its inherent stages (as we have seen) of fatigue, sterility, inner emptiness, passivity, turns to the lust for comfort. But the lust for comfort does not energise fresh Power. The child of the Power-man is very often a comfort-seeker; but the outcome of his cult is not more Power. An instance of this “entropy” is the American scene. We

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start as hard expositors of Power; we become soft consumers of comfort. But the means of this comfort are not created by the followers of the cult; they are the product still of men of Power. And a large part of the exercise of Power consists in the selling of “comfort-devices”—mechanical, political, ideal—to those who have already passed into the state where they are essentially “comfort-seekers.” If this is so, Power will finally cultivate a race so impotent that it will lack the means even of seeking comfort. . . . But this is a prophecy that does not reckon with the creative forces wresting themselves to-day from Power’s vicious circle. There is yet time. The history of the American people from the days of Franklin to our era of Rockefeller, Morgan, Edison and Ford is that of a nation so vastly endowed with Power, that the entropy to comfort has not yet visibly diminished Power-action.

This our people, vinctulated in the blind processes of Power, “freed” in America to act their bondage where external circumstance enlarged it, came, then, quickly to the need and cult of comfort. And lacked neither genius nor energy to go after what they wanted. America’s methods of procuring comfort are so diffuse and clamorous that they may speak for themselves. Plumbing, lighting, heating, locomotion and communication, speed in cooking, buying, talking, etc., etc.—wherever the means of living are stressed as means to comfort, they are American. Modern

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comfort and American comfort are synonyms through the world. We have myriad devices to make work comfortable, to make learning, medicine, religion, art and life *a comfort*. We have myriad agencies to preach the social dignity of comfort. And since all these means are articulate and persuasive, they have hypnotised our public into the belief that it has what it wants; into ignoring that America is still (as in the days of red men and stockades) one of the most uncomfortable countries in the world.

Of this let there be no doubt. Only Americans who have no experience with other lands, or who are such good mediums for hypnosis that an advertisement speaks to them more clearly than the ache of their own nerves, can fail to know that we are a comfortless and an increasingly uncomfortable people. There is more famine in the Sahara, but more comfort. There is more misery in Poland, in Egypt, and more comfort. All western Europe, despite primitive farms, decadent towns, and the growing gnaw of dynastic discord, is vastly superior in common comfort to our comfort-worshipping Republic. We who alone take comfort as a value, who expend genius to attain it, who are the symbol for comfort to all the envious and unknowing world, are gloomy, restless, harried and neurotic—are an uncomforted people.

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2

The truth beneath this fact concerns us. Why has our quest of comfort as a deliberate goal seemed to perpetuate and enhance our lack? The reasons may be divided into the practical, which are the superficial, and the basic. Let us look first at the surface. . . . Children of the age of the machine and of the reign of Power, we have resorted above all for comfort to mechanical devices. Since comfort becomes an external end, plainly not inherent in a life of Power, we consider the means to it external. We use Power to win what Power fails to give us.

Note now that the electric lights, steam-radiators, gas-stoves, phonographs, ready-to-eat foods—the whole numberless profusion of *things* offered us with the suggestion that they will bring us comfort, are the concern of individuals and companies whose end is not our comfort at all, but their own power-profit. Note next, that the word “offer” is a lie: by dint of salesmanship, assiduous, subtle, consciously dishonest, these things are forced on us. We did not guess that they were necessary to our comfort until the wits and capital of the land incessantly so schooled us. Then we took them on. Note, finally, that these spawning things at once acquire the force of habit: we come to need them, through the fact that without them we feel wanting. But something “new” is always wanting. The “means” of comfort, habit-form-

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ing, value-claiming, make us progressively more dependent on more things, in order to defeat a perpetual sense of deprivation.

Before long, these things forced on us were so many that they transformed our life. We had to adjust to them: they were the imperious fashioners and masters of our way and our world. We grew utterly dependent on certain kinds of stoves, lamps, means of communication. Not to keep up with these commands of "comfort" came to be figurative exile. We had to work ever harder to acquire them. The delusion of Comfort was serving its master—which is Power.

Our forefathers had lived in a continent made uncomfortable by the jungle of trackless forest, undrained marshes, unmastered mountains. We, having made a clearance, live in a continent made uncomfortable by a jungle of instruments of comfort. . . . But a short-cut to what we learn from living in a world devoted to the cult of comfort lies in a simple definition. We know the sources of our cult of comfort. What, then, *is* comfort?

Holding the term to its physical meaning, comfort is a harmony of forces within the body and of those impinging on it. It is a *felt* harmony; which means that the determining factor is inside the man. An internal equilibrium, either in "rest" or in motion, is the heart of the matter; and the value of external circumstance *qua* comfort depends wholly on its assimi-

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lation within the felt diapason of the body. Comfort, then, is an inner synthesis; and it is won by a control, instinctive or conscious or both. The essence, in winning comfort, is a control within us.

For example: a man in a Ritz apartment cannot be comfortable if he has a tooth-ache. With no dis-equilibrate nerves, he might be comfortable in a hay-loft. . . . This is all so obvious, that I should be ashamed to write it, were it not that 120,000,000 people—a tenth, and by their own ideal the most "progressive" tenth of the whole human world—live and act as if the contrary were true! By patent definition, comfort cannot be primarily achieved through appliances of any sort. And the more complex the external forces which impinge upon us, the stronger must be the internal control to assimilate these forces into that subjective rhythm which *is* comfort. The man who has the principle of comfort may variate it splendidly in a Ritz apartment. But what must we think of a man who, having a tooth-ache, tried to cure it by renting a whole hotel?

3

A comfortable, comfort-loving creature is the cat. Its principle of comfort is instinctive. Its bodily control automatically can absorb the stresses of the outer world which through ages have conditioned its cat life. It does not disdain a few sophisticated means for comfort, such as a rug or a stove, so long as it

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can assimilate them to its instinctive balance. A self-controlled man may enrich his comfort with machines. Cigar-lighters and electric fans and gas-stoves assuredly are not hostile to comfort; they are merely irrelevant to the essence of comfort. They become hostile, however, if we assume they are essential. For then our energy will go into acquiring and manipulating them, and be withdrawn from the inner control that should absorb them. Finding comfort still "beyond," in our delusion we seek more and more machines until we are enslaved and cluttered by them.

We cannot, like the cat, rely on instinctive control. We have surrounded our flesh with machines, furniture, cities, and put upon our flesh demands which our instincts ignore. Our outer nature is one of conceptual creatures; we must have concepts to control it. Even to be physically comfortable, we must have conscious values, conscious concepts.

But here, in our America, more irony is at work. The way to the control which is our way to comfort is *the experience of understanding*: and among the means to this experience are literature, art, pure science, learning. Through such means, in cultured worlds like China, India, France, man achieved the insight within himself and into his relation with the whole of life, which gave him wisdom to equilibrate the forces that beset him. We, in our cult of comfort, debauch these essential means of control into spurious instruments of comfort. We do not demand the

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experience of truth and wholeness from our arts and science. We desire that they pacify or titillate some part of us—our nerves, our pride. We want our novels to be candy, our theatres to compete with Coney Island: our critics to amuse us, our teachers to flatter us, our scientists to enrich us, our churches to be comfort-stations. We cheat ourselves of the experience of understanding by insisting on sensation, and thus bar the good sensations which only such experience could bring us. Pitifully, in our demand for comfort, we make more remote the comfort we demand. . . .

X: NEWS IS A TOY

1

NEWS is our dominant folk art. So dominant, that it encroaches on traditional forms of fiction. Titles of magazines like *True Love Stories*, *True Detective Stories*, *True Ghost Stories* attest the social will to enhance the value of an art by turning it into news. Critics also give witness to this in their evaluation and reporting of æsthetic works as news-carriers and as news-items. The proportion of persons engaged in making news is probably as great as was that of the makers of any folk art in any population. The part played by the folk in this art is passive, because our folk is passive. There are new elements in the art, even as in our folk and our nature. The fact remains. It should give pause to the believers of the dangerous conceit (born of the Rousseauistic cult of Demos) that a folk art must be a good art.

News is a toy. And as a toy, we shall best come to understand its possible values as an art. . . .

Consider a child with his plaything. He gets a new one rarely. He prizes it as part of himself. This, indeed, is the prime function of the toy. It is real enough, it occupies space, it may even have a practicable purpose. But its *toy-ness* lies in the fact that the child can refer it wholly to his will. His father's pencil and his mother's spoon have an end beyond his

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will. If he is allowed temporarily to use them, this reservation mars his possession. If they are given to him, he may still employ them as spoon or pencil, but the end of the employment is no longer the main matter. They are his—expressions of his ego.

The child's parents prosper, and toys become more frequent. Value is gradually transferred from the toy to the toy's novelty. The experience of power in possession needs to be refreshed. Old toys grow stale, and all too readily the child acquires the habit of looking for new playthings. The arrival of the toy, not the toy itself, becomes the event. This removal of the value of the toy to its novelty can, in the spoiled child, become almost perfect. A sick child surrounded by indulgent elders will demand his daily offering. What the toy intrinsically is grows minor. When his mother leaves for an afternoon or his father for a week-end, the return is a toy-occasion. Such a youngster, avid for the latest toy, jaded at once and avid for the next, is in the state of the American folk with its news.

The news is the plaything of a child whose hunger for toys has been stimulated shrewdly, and in whose hands there are pennies. An express-wagon, a hockey-stick, a celluloid duck have a certain objective existence. Literally, these things are events in themselves, irrespective of the tot that owns them. So, the news has an objective life of a sort. But its objectivity is not the main matter: like any toy, it

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must immediately relate to the public's will. This is what makes news of an event. Take a toy dog. The child calls it My doggy; he flings it about as he desires, picks it to pieces perhaps, tosses it forgotten to a corner, or, if it appeals strongly, carries it to bed. Similar is the behaviour of the average reader with the news. The news is "his." Pictures best establish this possession. He can ignore the news, or pick it to pieces, or even take it to bed. When he is weary of it, he can turn away, confident of the new toy of to-morrow.

The speed with which any child is "spoiled" into demanding new toys points to the significance of novelty in the power function which the toy supplies. A fresh plaything renews the child's opportunity to say: This is mine. A new plaything refreshes the element of discovery and conquest. These sops to the sense of power are more important than any objective use or pleasure the toy may bring. Any small child will prefer (if once so stimulated) seven new trivial toys in a week to one splendid toy in a month.

Of course, as the child becomes a boy or girl, there is a change. The lad of ten finds intrinsic uses for his skates or radio set that are closer to adult work than to the function of toys. The American public's attitude towards its toy is more comparable with that of a child of four, than of eight.

But the toys of the tot are useless little things—things artificially concocted for just toy ends: whereas

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the news of the daily press consists of serious events of the whole world? To believe this contrast, is to be deluded as the tot. Our daily news has an element of correspondence to the reality it represents *not one jot greater* than that of a toy pussy to a cat, of a toy motor to an actual car. Take the typical news of the day: international politics, local politics, the murder, the divorce. As it is dished hot by the press, it is as remote in content, colour, substance, from the event it imitates, as the most primitive rag doll is remote from a human being. The news is a crude simulacrum, concocted to please the public, to fit its need of playing master, of "knowing itself" and of expressing its otherwise inarticulate emotions.¹

Not exactitude is demanded of the news, but novelty. Not reality but *graphic presence*. Not strangeness but common emotional appeal, so that the reader without effort may identify the story with his own moods and wishes.² The public reads the same news

¹The case of sports and of many exploits in aviation is distinct. These are events specifically fashioned for news purposes, and having small inherent life beyond their availability as news. Therefore the news report of them will not be so discrepant from the event itself. Sports (in America) are like toys that do not imitate some adult form (as a doll imitates a baby) but that have inherent toy-form—like a rattle, for instance.

²The reader will recall Dana's definition: "A dog bites a man is not news. A man bites a dog *is* news." Mr. Bruce Bliven has pointed out that this epigram is false. News to-day may be: "A dog bites a man." As the newsprints more consciously fulfil their toy-function, the novelty is ever more transferred from the fact to the presentation. A child does not want a freak doll—it wants a new doll, and it prefers a doll that is *like everyday*. But, it will be objected, the papers are full of adultery and murder—and not everybody commits adultery and murder. No: but everybody wants to. Good news is a symbol of what everybody wants and cannot have; even as the good toy is a symbol of what every child wants and cannot have, *except through the symbol*.

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three hundred times a year, since every day it is news. The public looks week after week at pictures of celebrities so vague that easily they could be re-issued (perhaps they are) over different names. What matters is that each morning and afternoon bring the fresh occasion, however stale the "fact." New discovery, new conquest, complete subjective power to assimilate and to enjoy; these are of the essence, in news as in toys.

The question, of course, arises: Can the daily news become something "more important," something more true than a toy? In the "Phædrus," Socrates tells of an old Egyptian god, called Theuth, who was "the inventor of many arts . . . but his great discovery was the use of letters." Theuth went with his inventions to the god Thamus who was king of the whole country, and proudly showed them off.

. . . when they came to letters, This, said Theuth, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories; it is a specific both for the memory and for the wit. Thamus replied: O most ingenious Theuth, the parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions to the users of them. And in this instance, you who are the father of letters, from a paternal love of your own children have been led to attribute to them a quality which they cannot have; for this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth

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but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.

We are the fulfilment of Plato's prophecy. The relation between the written word and the truth is not, as we have fatuously supposed, immediate or easily attained. To turn the word into a bearer of true knowledge is a problem arduous and profound; and yet I know not half a dozen men of the hordes professionally writing in America who suspect that it is a problem at all. The report of an event approaches truth in the extent that it brings to the consciousness of the reader the essential, whole context of that event: no event is isolate; its integration with other events, its adumbration into all life and the inherency of life in it, make its truth; and only the report which articulates the event widely, deeply, essentially along these lines is true. . . . But it is no less plain that this demand runs counter to the need of news. The news event must seem strikingly novel (however intrinsically banal or universal): hence it must be *alone*. It must stress surface, not essence. To be swiftly assimilable by the emotion of the reader, it must be stripped of all connotations, complexities, depths. Even sensorily, it must be simple, lest it confuse the reader. It must leave him free of pause in which he might meditate, analyse, relate. It must de-

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lusively meet his sense of power, and to this end subtly palliate his desire for truth. To become news, an event is destroyed by becoming part of the immediate personal self of the reader: to become truth an event is merged with the reader into an understanding that transcends the fact of them both. There is, then, antithesis of purpose.

The answer to our question is therefore clear. So long as the public is immature, news to be read by it must be a toy-art. So long as it is immature, nothing could be more important than its toys. The gentlemen who desire to turn the daily press into organs of "veritable knowledge" are hence not even good utopists: they are like the pedants of a bygone day who forced Euclid and the Talmud on unbreeched boys. The real problem is, not to give to Demos a nurture utterly beyond its powers—and hence beyond *its needs*; but, since it must and will have toys, to see that the toys are good.¹

2

How this particular toy can be made good by causing it to serve its purpose is revealed in one trait of

¹The ideal of news moving towards truth is probably beyond the present feasible limits of the American press. *The Rambler* and *The Spectator* were more veritably "truths-papers" than the present London press. In Madrid and Paris, there still survive compact small groups of intelligent readers who can be swiftly and cheaply reached by modest daily prints whose financial needs hence do not force them into turning the discussion of events into news. But in America, what with the keying of all industry, commerce, distribution, etc., to mass-methods, a daily truths-paper is out of the question. The ideal compromise is probably the weekly. We have, so far as I know, two weekly truths-papers in our vast land: *The New Republic* and *The Nation*. Some day, we should have fifty.

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the news which marks it off from toys that fulfil chiefly the individualism of the child. The news, among other things, is a simulacrum of *communal behaviour*. The individual "acts" the group member when he reads the news, as the girl "acts" the mother when she plays with her doll. Both acts are narrowly unrealistic, and yet are potentially real. The delusion of the American public that it is in touch with, and in control of events distinguishes us from the masses of previous epochs who had not risen to this high level of pretense: it is the kind of delusion, like the hypocrisy which we have noted in our cults of Power, that is a promise. And it is a clew to the type of stimulation which news should provide. As the child grows up, it learns that its toy is not reality. This knowledge is transitional to adolescence. By the same token, our news would become an effective agent of communal behaviour, if it began to suggest the organic contrast, as we have observed it, between the news and the truth. It might, however crudely, present its detailed "facts" in some background which implied the whole of life and gave a proportionate value and reality to its news. Of course, our newspaper is set in the contrary direction. It gives to each detail it prints an absolute value, determined by no vision of the world at all. Indeed, it prides itself on this lack of vision, not knowing that it has merely substituted a vision of the whole by a vision of the day's supply of thrills and by a measure of

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their relative "pulling power." It does its best to preserve in its public the infantilism of pure delusion.

We have a "respectable" press whose urge to be laden with advertisements and to swell its circulation forces it to give essentially the same news as the tabloids. The real distinction between our papers is only one of toys: and for the most part it is the difference between dressed-up dolls, the pretentious contraptions inflicted on the progeny of the rich, and the crude playthings of the poor. Any educator will tell you that the poor child has the better toy: a bit of wood which a babe can push across the floor arouses and lubricates its imagination more than a sumptuous electric train. The chief purpose of the toy is not to instruct the mind: it is far deeper, since it is to provide means of sensory and emotional expression. Identical is the function which our daily news can best develop. We have a folk sensorily macerated and repressed in an industrial-commercial jungle. Our editors who give it fantasies of opulent bedrooms, epics about robbers, photographs of silk-sheathed legs, perform their job on a contemptible level, but they are closer to the life of news than the insincere romantics who purvey precisely the same matter under the pretense of teaching a primitive passive folk how to elect good Presidents, appreciate good books, or understand the Cosmos. These gentlemen, through their failure to admit the veritable nature of the news,

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cheat it of the superior growth, *as a folk art*, which their superior taste should bring it.¹

¹There are times when the difficulties in the way of this improvement seem to me—under capitalism—almost insuperable. Take, for instance, the debauching effect of the advertisement on newspaper prose. The notion that our journals and ads are well written, or even concisely written, is utterly false. The vast spaces of advertisement require the writing of columns of news, far beyond what the news actually calls for. The news is therefore padded; a huge surfeit of narrative words, necessary to flank the hat and motor ads, tends to make the general newspaper style thin, watery, fussy with unessential detail and utterly formless. For every article must so be written that it can be cut in pieces, like a worm: the bulk of advertisement determining how much shall be “run.” The advertisements themselves are even worse. They are repetitious—nauseously so, since their very aim is to say little in much space: *parvum in multo*. And this little is so spiced with disguised appeals to snobbery and sex, that the resultant style is disgusting: the more “stylish,” the more disgusting. And yet, what remedy can there be for this, short of a radical change in social structure—and of the men who make that structure?

XI: OUR CURRENT ARTS

1

EVERY work of art has two aspects which make one whole, but which analysis may separately consider: æsthetically, it is an organism endowed with its own irreducible life; culturally, it is a sum of elements, psychological and social. The æsthetic aspect is clearly the ultimate and the more important; but it can be approached only when the cultural bases are given, even as man can be intelligently judged *as a man* only when there is some knowledge of the physiology, psychology, and sociology of which he is the product. Our aim here is strictly cultural, and in a special sense. We are preparing a portrait of American life, by the abstraction of typical lines from typical forms. Although it means a violence to the arts and to the author's natural æsthetic interest as an artist, I can here consider books and pictures, plays and songs only in so far as they advance us to our essential goal. I do not attempt to cover the field, nor even to do æsthetic justice to the few examples of our art, selected. . . .

2

These arts, literary, plastic, musical, reveal two facts: the enormous energy of American life does not infuse them, and the American traditions do not in-

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form them. South of us, the case is otherwise. We find, for example, that the best painters of Mexico and Peru have absorbed their classic Amerindian forms, mastered the technic of modern Paris, shared the experience of the native, and welded the life of all these forces into a contemporary plastic action. Not less consummately do the tales and dances of Argentina employ the traditions of a people almost purely Latin to express a spirit wholly American. Our Southern brothers have been more fortunate than we, in the conditions that create an ethos. In Mexico and Peru, conqueror and conquered intermarried for four hundred years; there has been this profound dying together of Indian and European, and a rising of new life, darkly and naturally, from the soil to the sky. In the Argentine and Chile, where the Indian element is weak (as with us), there has been more harmony of European strains, more isolation for their self-adjustment: a deep indwelling in lieu of the wide centrifugal urge of our "manifest destiny." The racial and economic wholeness of these lands has bound their experience together and given the ethos for cultural expression. Their political instability is not, as we suppose, a mark of their inferiority. Rather it is a sign of healthy adolescence. They are folk in whom exists an immediate bond between impulse and action. Their bridge from one to the other is often a crude political conviction, often a murder or a silly revolution. But the attempt at the bond between

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ideal and deed is sincere. The disorder of their governments, while, of course, it points to immature control, therefore rises from the same need of making a whole of idea and behaviour, which creates true order in their arts. And our political stability, of which we are so proud, is a result of the same irresponsiveness to our intuitions, our feelings and convictions—the same escape from these into stereotyped gestures that (being ready made) give us the illusion of success—which make us poor in art. Their disorder is a negative sign of life: our order is the menace of a death. . . .

Our arts are the victims of the circumstances we have studied. A work of art is a particular constructed body from which is to be derived the *experience* of unity between the self and what is not the self. It is the simplest as well as the ultimate expression of wholeness. In a jungle of deliquescent, unassimilated forces; in a field of Power whose action, as we have seen, is against this marriage of self with the non-self, art will struggle feverishly and fecklessly. In such a world, it will be most cryingly needed, most passionately sought for, most difficult to achieve. Often it will be corrupted wholly from its æsthetic purpose, to become a mere mirror or apology of Power. Often it will emerge impure from its matrix of the world, maimed by the forces it should fuse, stifled by the traditions which should nourish it.

The art most grandiosely reflective of our reign of

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Power is the skyscraper, which we have analysed already. Other arts wholly reflective and apologetic are the popular movie, the newspaper, the magazine short story, the academic painting, the realistic novel. At a popular depth where the relics of past custom still lie thick, this last art becomes the tales of Harold Bell Wright; on more sophisticated levels where the winds of dissolution blow the shards away, we have the galaxy of gilded fiction which commands most of the praise of our reviewers. Mrs. Wharton, Edna Ferber, Fannie Hurst, Joseph Hergesheimer, Willa Cather, are examples: their competent stuff is reflective, mechanical, apologetic: æsthetically, it is one with the clumsier confections. It is so wholly debauched from art's dynamic purpose that it presents no true æsthetic body.

3

More interesting is the art which is part reflection and apology of our chaos, and part rebellion from it. Here a recreative will is at work on the substance of American life, strong enough to assert its presence but not so strong that it transfigures the chaos. Jazz music and the vaudeville grotesque dance are of this group. The Charleston mirrors the movements of the machine in the reflexes of the human nerves; but personal revolt flashes from within these trammels in lyric outburst. The forms of such popular dances are direct transcriptions of the life of man within the me-

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chanical jungle; they thrill us because of the emergence of rebellion: but the revolt is wistful, it does not master, it is reflective rather than creative. Jazz music is a similar flutter of dissent from the traditional base of harmonic, melodic forms. Its body is of our jungle of traditions: German romantic music, for the most part. The jazz consists of departures, angular, sporadic, in no way organic, from the old foundations. In the songs of Irving Berlin, for instance, the musical materials and the values are the direct descendants of romantic *Lieder*: these elements he shuffles into his own American expression.¹ Alike is the poetry of T. S. Eliot. Here the mood is also wistful and romantic, but the body of the art is derived from a more intellectual tradition: English poetry. Aristocratic sentiment, a vague oriental wisdom are subtly disarrayed to bear the mood of a meagre modern soul. Æsthetically and culturally, there is little to choose between the best of Berlin and "Mr. Prufrock" or "The Waste Land."

In this group also belong the works of John Dos Passos and John Howard Lawson. The substance of "Manhattan Transfer," as of the grotesque dance, is the regimented disarray of city life. And from its reflection rises the lyric note, loose, leaping, fading. In "The Moon Is a Gong," "Processional," or "The International," our mirrored jungle is employed clum-

¹It is worth noting that the two races which are most assimilative and reflective, yet most maladjusted to our Jungle—the Negro and the Jew—are pre-eminent in the Jazz arts.

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sily to voice a spiritual assertion which would be magnificent (particularly in the case of Lawson) if it were organic and conscious. The social-revolutionary twist in the writings of these men is æsthetically kin to the personal sentiment in our music shows. It is a lyrical addition, it transfigures nothing. Lawson is as satisfied to let his characters shout Revolution, as Al Jolson to mutter Mammy. A better performance, but still of the same class, is the "Him" of E. E. Cummings. Within the chaos of our being, poetically imaged as a woman's ether dream, she who is "me" and her lover who is "him" stir helplessly. Delirium corrodes the illusion of their real world. They lose, in their abject solitude, the certainty even of their passion. In this play, as in his lyrics, Cummings has found for the popular dance and jazz an equivalent in terms of the highest impressionistic art of Europe. The nostalgia of T. S. Eliot and Berlin is feeble; it is the refrain, dissolved in our world, of early nineteenth-century romantics (Musset and Nerval—Schubert and Robert Franz). In Cummings, the language is authentic. A personal compassion transforms the texture, if not the text of life. Modern hands, within the dynamo of the modern world, unable to direct it or to stop it, or to withdraw from it to safety, bleed and writhe and of their agony weave music.

Of this class, also, is the rhetorical art of H. L. Mencken. To understand his appeal one must think

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of Jolson shouting Mammy, of Miss Brice's Yiddish Indian, of the vaudeville performer Cummings who, at the sight of a girl in a bathing suit, tears off his shirt, devours his straw hat and breaks a grand piano. Mencken is a critic only in the sense of this Cummings, whose demoniac outburst "criticises" our Puritan repressions. Beyond a fondness for Haydn, and good beer, a superficial reading of Nietzsche, and a yeoman's service in collecting (without understanding) American foibles, there is no evidence in Mencken of intellectual action. But he exhibits well his minor poet's soul; and the fact that he does this by playing the cymbals should not deafen us to his kinship with Eliot and Berlin. The mechanical chaos he rebels from becomes the reflective body of his art: it is revealed in his violent bumptiousness of phrase, his smooth external rhythms, his exhibitionism. The personal lyric note emerging from his "message" is a dim desire for some sort of hierarchised order, where Mencken's childish will for Power will lord it over others. The art of Sinclair Lewis is of this family. The substance is Main Street; the type characters, admirably stylised, are syncopated to suggest a rebellion against Main Street. This is done, as in our grotesque dance, by bending the gestures of compliance with chaos, into a revolt from chaos—a revolt which remains lyric, inorganic. These artists are critics of our society, only if the dancer of the Charleston is a critic. The critical sense is in *us*; it

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brings us a dim dissatisfaction with our world: and by their transfiguring of our disease into a lyric outburst, such arts relieve us. If a critic is a revealer, the scold is the contrary of the critic. The critic's satisfaction is understanding; the scold's is an emotional violence that drains the need of understanding. . . . In the books of Theodore Dreiser, the reflection of our jungle is more deep, because the man's refusal is more profound and more engaging of his passion. All of Dreiser broods, whereas only the nerves of Lewis leap. His tune is plaintively self-suffering, rather than sadistic. His richer temperament makes darker and more plastic the reflected chaos of our world. Yet he belongs in this group.

Its dominant trait justifies calling it "the family of jazz"; for the trick in the jazz dance or song, the jazz comic strip, the jazz vaudeville stunt, of twisting a passive reflex to our world into a lyrical self-expression is in all these arts. Eliot and Berlin, Cummings and Lewis have the same appeal. The fact that some have a small audience and some a large, is due to a mere difference in their idioms: another proof of the essential likeness of all American "atoms"—high-brow or low. Devotion to our chaos underlies and directs the shallower rebellion from it. Servitude is perhaps the precise word. In ideal and emotion, these men are measured by the dissolute world from which they yearn to make escape. Their nostalgia is but the perfume of decay. Their art reflects what

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they hate because *they* are reflections; its lyric glow is our world's phosphorescence.

Other artists are moved by a revolt more absolute. They reject wholly the ideas and substance of our chaos. But since our chaos is our life, is the material not alone of self but of the Whole which art aspires to create, these rejectors excommunicate themselves from the domain of spirit. Naught is left for them but artifice and shadowy postures of the past. An example of this group, at its worst, is James Branch Cabell. The revolt is clear enough in him; but his refusal of the America about him merely causes him to lapse into a bookish sterile manneristic fancy. The true way of the artist is neither to reflect nor to reject the world; but to accept and transform it.

More significant is the way of Sherwood Anderson. In his best tales—"Winesburg," "The Triumph of the Egg," "Dark Laughter"—the man's refusal of the world about him drives him into a search and cult of the elemental in himself. His characters are figures of primitive desire; they enact the hungers which a surface civilisation has driven underground and kept wistful and weak. The intellectualising Anderson is an unconscious follower of Rousseau. But the artist draws luminous portraits, more musical than plastic, of the childish consciousness of the American soul. The inside of a thing may be soft, the outside hard: only a two-dimensional eye would thence deduce that the hardness and softness

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did not go together. Thus, the contrast of Anderson with the sophisticate school (in which Ernest Hemingway excels) is but an oscillation of the adolescent mind, from one temper to another. Sentimental tears react into sentimental toughness. Nothing, said Taine, so much resembles convex as concave. Mr. Hemingway has clamped the masque of bravado on the bewildered visage of Anderson's seeker. The world of both is one; the motive of escape beneath their contrasting methods is one, also.

4

Over the same course, other artists have progressed to more plastic worlds of their own: worlds that are less simply *theirs*. Robert Frost, who wrote

I may as well confess myself the author
Of several volumes against the world in general,

may stand for this group, at its best. His poems are a haven from the irrelevant storm of our modern chaos. In them, the farms and farmers of New Hampshire grow into abstracted lives, classic in their aloofness, hard with his own experience, and radiant with his spirit. The miracle, here, is that the art is at once detached from, and yet essentially involved with "the world in general" that it refuses. It is a germinal seed. And Frost is a prophet. For the transformed survival of the rotted natives of Frost's New

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England in Frost's poems bespeaks his own survival, and their capacity of transformation. The possibility—and the terrible cost—of spiritual birth in our America is here revealed. In the novels of Evelyn Scott, we find how such birth can miscarry. Mrs. Scott, whose genius should place her as high among American writers of her sex as Miss O'Keeffe stands among our women painters, both rejects and embraces the world. She proves the analogy of hate with love. The characters of "The Narrow House," "Ideals," "Narcissus," are men and women wrenched from the womb of life. They are formed, they are plastic; all they lack is to be born. In frozen dumb-show, she puts them through their postures. In the glare of her inverted love, their colours are stains, their passions the grimace of her own distrust. If they have life, it is still within their author: it is the life of her compassionate hatred.¹

5

The triumph of John Marin, water-colourist, is more direct, more endearing, more *alive*. Like the best of Wordsworth or of Shelley, his work is perfect and as an æsthetic body it demands acceptance.

¹I have just read "We Are Incredible," the first novel of another woman of great gift. It is interesting to note how close is the temper of Margery Latimer to that of Mrs. Scott—however different her literary method. With the exception of Isadora Duncan, America has yet to produce a woman artist sufficiently free of the inferiorities which American life has put upon her sex, to create a fully liberated plastic work. The reasons will be more clear when we come to examine the American woman.

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John Marin has found the human world dark and unwieldy. But there is light in trees, in fences, in mounds of earth, in the glance of sun on sails: and from this he has made the grammar of his soul. The common details of his landscapes are revalued like common words in a lyric. What they express is ample for the artist: yet not ample for us, precisely because they articulate his refusal to form his beauty from the world of men. A comparison with Cézanne reveals the cause of our dissatisfaction. The Frenchman paints *anything*—from hayricks to nudes. His physical world is penetrable, as a whole, by his transfiguring spirit. And this entire interfusion between the man and the world gives us in his work an experience whose æsthetic intensity is religious. Marin's plastic, lighted by the misty sun of Maine, would be a remarkable asset in any culture. For us to note, however, is the same refusal to accept the immediate materials of our chaos and to transfigure these into his beauty. The fact that Marin (like so many of our leading artists) paints a world without men and women is a symbol. The man who has won or inherited wholeness in himself, through the experience of his connection with all men, may convey this integration in any subject: witness the still-lives of Chardin, the landscapes of Cézanne. But in Marin, these subjects are a refuge for his separation. His art, hence, is romantic. It is too close in spirit to the hermitage of Brook Farm, where fine spirits sought solace from

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industrialism by denying it. We must have art that is not retreat; that is conquest.

Myths of refuge within the self, or within the aloof poesy of country fields, may be high art; and they are needed in a period of pre-culture: they quicken both the self and the chaos—warm them and make them ready for the creative union. In the universal art of Charles Chaplin, we have eloquent proof that this preparatory process is a trait of us all, folk and intellectual alike. The world of Charles Chaplin is alone yet in constant touch with the world “outside.” To express his subterfuge from Dulness, he has created a masque that his whole body forms; and all mankind loves, in its dark hour of relaxation, to hide behind it. He is the supreme expression of this group of artists; one wonders, indeed, if escape could make more loveliness than his. Note that the immortal little man never confronts the world; even his walk is a symbol of sly ambling out of the way; and the most perfect close to a Chaplin film is the back-turned figure lessening to the horizon. Note also Chaplin’s inability to construct a plot that is more than a negative foil to himself. He carries his cosmos within him—from his feet to the tip of his cane; all else is irrelevance. But in this mite resides the beauty and grace. We are for him, since in his dwarfed domain dwells all our love. We give him victory over Power. Charlie working in a bank (as we do), running from the police, hurling impotent pies at Authority and

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Order, is a cancer of sweetness and light within the bitter body of our darkness. Yet the assumption of his art is ever that these things we love are fanciful, unreal and helpless. There is no hope, no encounter, no actual issue. Chaplin is a pessimist and a defeatist (like most great masters of the comic). Comedy is the art of escape; and the implication of escape is that there is no hope in standing firm. The art of confrontation is tragedy. Where there is hope of life, there is the will to face it in its bitter truth, there is the need to prove hope by the truth. The song of Chaplin is the reverse. Its motif is a sly self-preservation through a refusal of the challenge of our jungle and a retreat into a personal realm of faëry. There, in the sureness of the unreal, with beauty and love platonically present, one dares give a fillip—even a kick to the world!¹

6

So far we have come: to refuse disorder, and to make little insulate havens—sudden, breathless victories—of our own. These creations are *in spite* of the modern chaos: now, groping, stumbling, move forth the artists whose sense of their work is tragic. Like the prophets, from Moses to Whitman, they conceive art as created *from*, and not in spite of, chaos.

¹Such art is needed, also, in a period of cultural dissolution—of “post-culture”: hence the equal popularity of Chaplin in Europe—in old worlds as well as in the new. I suspect that in our day, only an art which sang the primordial, savage, wistful atom of the disinherited soul could be universally acclaimed. Rousseau is the philosopher of our epoch of death and birth: Chaplin is its poet.

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Whitman naturalised within our world the project of such art; less directly, Melville. They did little more. In its place, we shall consider the precise meaning of their message.¹ Here, it is enough to say that the jungle of fact, value and tradition, which was too strong for their grappling, in our day has grown still more inchoate.

The ideal forms we have inherited are finally dissolved; therefore the message of our fathers, based on those forms, must be transfigured by us, ere we can use it. To our tragic artists there remains only the *apocalyptic method*. They must literally make the plastic form of their vision from the plasmic substance of their experience—without obedience to conceptual heritage or æsthetic tradition. This direct recreation of a formal world from the stuffs within us is what I mean by the apocalyptic method; and elements of it are to be found in our arts. The dance of Isadora Duncan, the sculpture of Gaston Lachaise, the paintings of Arthur Dove, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Marsden Hartley, the music of Leo Ornstein, the writings of William Carlos Williams, the mystical verse of Hart Crane, the "Lazarus Laughed" of Eugene O'Neill, the photographic studies, by Alfred Stieglitz, of the skies and of the nude, are of this class. These last, perhaps, the most American of all, since the substance of the man's apocalyptic vision is *recorded nature* and since his tool is a machine. But

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these apocalyptic arts are not yet current. They cannot be discussed here without a labour of exposition which would be out of place. Later, when we come to the creative work that the individual must do upon himself in order to live creatively at all, we shall understand more directly the values and function of these apocalyptic artists. Whether such arts grow, we shall see, depends on the growth of the America we envisage: and whether this America comes to be depends on the growth of such arts.¹

7

From our swift search, we turn to the enormous energy of the American world, made manifest in our tumultuous mountains, in our sea-like plains, in our meteor climates, in our cities, in our babel of folks; we turn to the challenge of our tradition, as Emerson,

¹As this book goes to press, I find Allen Tate's "Mr. Pope, and Other Poems." His work marks the liaison between the older romantic pessimism of Eliot and Cummings, and the apocalyptic vision to which Williams aspires and of which Crane is as yet the chief prophet. And it strikes me as particularly important since it points to a transition towards the latter and away from the former. The poetic spirit of Cummings and Eliot is soft; they are (as poets) sentimental exquisites, and their prosody is as fluid as their spirit. Their work is the impression of our rowdy day on the sensitised wax of their despair. Now, in Tate (certain recent verse of Ivor Winters begins to reveal this, as well), the prosody grows hard, the image is lithic, the weight of the words is virile. Tate's mind is still under the twilight sway of the earlier men. Thus he begins with an elegy on Pope, and concludes his volume with a *fin de monde* apostrophe to his Muse: *ignis fatuus*, he calls it—

What is the riot
When the pigeon moults his ease
Or exile utters the creed of memory?

in which the temper of Eliot is galvanised by the rhetoric of Rimbaud and Crane. But this very contradiction reveals what heartens me.

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Whitman, Poe announced it; and we are confirmed in the two statements with which we began. There is small connection between these splendours and our arts. Our arts are fragmented by the chaos of our jungle, servile beneath them; childishly rebellious or self-assertive weakly by escape. At best, they are helpless to embrace and to transfigure the *flesh* of our world. Our artists, even in their intentions, make no whole of their destiny as Americans and as heirs of Man. They must learn to accept what lives within and without them, ere they can be the seed of a creative future. But they cannot accept, until they learn to *see*. Against this vision of the whole, there works a negative and a positive obstruction. We have no concepts and no values of wholeness; we are so bewildered by our jungle that we lack the most elementary knowledge of what art is, the most elementary

Tate's mind is still "lost"; yet his words have an elemental clang, foreboding and challenging, not consonant with this mind. The result, throughout his book, is an emphasis irrelevant like a deep man's voice expressing a child's fears. This textual emphasis, so different from Eliot and Cummings, so close to Rimbaud and Crane, belies Tate's intellectual lack of vision. In Eliot, the erudite heritage of worlds is a burden; from it rises a perfume of decay and reminiscence. Here, in this American neo-primitive, it becomes part of a plasmic substance pushing up, of its own weight, to a fresh plastic form.

In Tate, then, it is the texture rather than the overt meaning of his words, which I find apocalyptic. The man *feels* beyond his sight. The converse is promising in such a work as O'Neill's "Lazarus Laughed." There is a deliberate programme of prophecy; but the texture of the play is a thin, effete lyricism. O'Neill is intellectually aware of the apocalyptic need in his art; and æsthetically unable to transfigure his perceptions so as to make his images the organic stuff of such creation.

My point is that these men are not accidentals. O'Neill's following is well known. Less known is the fact that such men as Williams, Crane, and now Tate, Winters, Malcolm Cowley, the *Fugitive* group and others represent a direct emergence from the reflective temper which Eliot represents. His influence is still strong; but it is breaking.

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means for mastery of art's materials. The positive obstruction is the complex of forces, inherited from our past and cluttering the expansion of our potential spirit. These forces I call censors.

XII: OUR CENSORS

1

SUPPOSE we went to a meeting at which a vital matter was to be discussed. If the chairman silenced a gang of ignorant, malevolent, alien fellows in order to give the floor to the expert, we should not find his act censorious; we should justify it as a necessary means for achieving consciousness on a vital question. Suppose, again, we accepted the premises and ideals of Socrates in "The Republic." Although he bars the lying poets—the artists who "in servile imitation of the unreal flux" woo man from "truth," we should not call this censorship, for the same reason that forbiddance of perjury in a court, of forgery in a bank, of lies in a journal, is not censorship to us who accept the ideals of these institutions. But suppose we felt that the alien fellow at the meeting alone had the heart of the matter: suppose we disagreed with Socrates about truth and art: the word "censor" would come clamouring to our lips with all its modern implications of tyranny and injustice.

Such implications were not felt by Plato, who called his guardians of truth and justice censors, by More who set up censorship in Utopia, by the Catholic princes who have always looked on censors as needful for the soul's salvation. What was there in common between all these men making them look on

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editorship as good, and different from us who deem it evil? The change is in the attitude towards Truth (and towards Good as rising from the truth). If truth is considered absolute and already perfectly possessed, falsehood and evil also become absolute and a censorship which is a "previous restraint" of them is proper. This is one ideal; but we do not profess it. Since Milton and Spinoza, modern men have claimed that truth is a flower of individual conscience, that it is not dogmatically fixed, that it is a process of life, and that all shades of opinion, of trial, even of error, are needed to approach it. With such a standard, censorship even of probable falsehood, even of thought that threatens evil, is a menace. But unfortunately the men who rebelled against the absolute of Rome set up opponent absolutes of their own. And our fathers who warred against the absolutes of the monarch merely shifted their loyalty to absolutes in property and state. It is this confusion between ideal and fact which stultifies American discussions of the censor. We hate censorship with an ideal hatred of the absolutes we have discarded; and enforce our protest, like as not, with an appeal to absolutes no less tyrannous because they are domestic and disguised. With one breath, for instance, we call for "free speech," with the next we hail the sovereignty of People or of Law—and do not suspect the contradiction. Any sovereignty is an absolute. And if any force or truth is absolute, censorship in its name is an ideal

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act—even as it was ideal in the name of the Truth of Plato, of the God of Rome, of the King of France. The feeling behind Milton's assault on censors was that the old Order was dying, so that a "previous restraint" on the basis of that Order was a bar to the birth of a new order. This feeling is not sustained by a people who set up Demos in place of a Pope and a constitution in place of the Bible. To accept an authority and cry out against a censorship which enforces it is to be muddle-headed. The crux of the matter is not censorship at all, but the ideal behind it.

2

Our American Republic is ruled, like Plato's, by philosopher-kings of a sort. The trouble is, that some of us deny their quality of kingship: the trouble is, deeper, that we repugn their values: the trouble is, most deep of all, that whereas those values and that kingship are real to the rulers and to them who follow, we who rebel have not, beyond the vaguest romantic aspirations, shaped ideals of our own to combat theirs, not organised at all our connection with this American Republic in order to oust the present "insider." We are the "alien fellows." No sentimental call for freedom, no nonsense about oppression which from the inside appears to be control—only subtle infiltration and conversion will ever alter our inferior place.

In this classic use of the word as a previous re-

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straint by order of some absolute, censorship in America is manifold and vast. That part of it which takes the form of a deliberate ban on political or sexual candor is a mere minor symptom. Censorship in America is rulership. We might study the whole matter in one archetypical instance: the American Constitution. It is a hybrid creature: many of its sources—Locke, Hobbes, Hume, Harrington, Shaftesbury, Montesquieu, etc.—delete or confuse each other. At the time of its drafting, it was a decadent organ, for it rendered rigid the timidities of English Tories, instead of bringing to life the profound projects of the early American fathers. It was closer to Nathaniel Ward who went back to England to die,¹ than to men like Roger Williams who made a veritable marriage in our country of government and spirit. As Walter Lippmann suggests in his "Preface to Politics," the true father of the Constitution was Sir Isaac Newton: not the religious Newton who believed that man was a creative soul, but the physicist who deduced the music of the stars to formulæ of check and balance. The Constitution was a *machine* working in a realm where the intelligent followers of Newton and Descartes might have known that it did not belong. It was a machine for governing men, devised by men who were muddled with contradictory religions. They had an abstract faith in laws, a concrete distrust of

¹See the chapter on Ward in Vernon Louis Parrington's "Main Currents in American Thought."

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man, and a concrete faith in their own class. They designed the instrument in self-sufficient balance so as to relieve individual man (mistrusted and acclaimed) of the onus, while endowing him with the air, of government. The result was a triumph of mechanolatry, a compromise of the creed whose patrists were Bacon, Descartes, Newton, with the Hebrew doctrine of authoritative Scripture. The country which yielded to it was a sprawling frontier of commerce, agriculture, pioneering; a cacophony of voices. Lacking a conscious principle of union, it rested within this mould that defended the dissonance of Sections by putting the burden of harmony on its own artificial tightness.

The inventors of this machine were practical men of genius; its acceptance by eighteenth-century America was an act of mystic good fortune which all the cavillings of critics cannot confute. Yet it is clear that the conditions and values which the Constitution was designed to fulfil have changed: that the Americas which adopted it have died: that the ideals and facts of those Americas are gone. This is no place to analyse the Constitution. But its discrepancy from our world is so enormous that no expert scrutiny is required to reveal it. Consider the tenet (the words are by Adams): "property is as sacred as the laws of God." Consider the defense of minorities on the principle (as Madison put it) that a majority in "an extended sphere" is not likely to "have a common mo-

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tive to invade the rights of other citizens"—consider it in the light of how the press, business, telegraph, radio, etc., have bound our majority together. Compare the fundamental constitutional will to erect a federal force against what were at the time dominant, singular States, with the flatulent reality of our modern States which the resistless urge of industry and commerce has brought all together and is making all alike. . . . It is not too much to say that every assumption about the world of God, of matter, of man, and of America, which filled the conclaves of the fathers, is as dead as their breath. Nor was it worshipped, when it was new.¹ Yet to this antiquated makeshift, constructed by shrewd but spiritually callous men, we Americans must swear allegiance! In order to do so, we must be careful not to understand it. And in order to guard our ignorance, we have erected systems of subsidiary censors, to bar our minds and emotions from any contact with the Constitution which would bring it into touch with life at the cost of sanctity. It is vigorously lied about in our schools, glossed with adjectival sugar in our churches. It is occultly protected by nine pontifical judges—high priests without a god—in whom is solely vested the ticklish business of so interpreting it, that thought about it *by Americans* (but not legislation under it *by Money*) may be wholly estopped. It has become, in

¹"We are prone to forget the wide popular disfavor with which the new constitution was received," writes Professor Parrington.

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other words, no mere instrument for government, but an absolute whose power is so perfect that the notion of government as a creative, evolving exercise of thinking groups has almost died from the land.

Our rigorous devotion does not mean that the Constitution acts rigorously on us. "The only truly severe code," says John Dewey, "is the one which foregoes codification, throwing responsibility for judging each case upon the agents concerned, imposing upon them the burden of discovery and adaptation." This old machine serves merely to separate our national values from national reality. It censors the ideal impulse in American life from moving into political behaviour. But it is too rigid, too obsolete to have effect on the blind forces that really govern us. To these, it leaves the field. Good Americans neither read nor sense it. But the merely shrewd and acquisitive can easily exploit it.

The Constitution is a censor, because we make it one. Since it exerts a power external to the growing life of its domain; since it bars creative action from its presumptive field; since life in every form from science to religion moves outside its spirit, it is a bad censor. And since in its discrepancy from what is vital, it is typical of all our institutions, we are right in our modern feeling that censorship is bad. That element in American life which is not merely Power, which *is* life inasmuch as it upholds the principle of growth and consciousness, has lost connection with

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the ideals that sway and with the inherited forms that by inertia shape us. Hence the modern definition of censorship that we have come to. *A force that restrains in rhythm with organic growth is a control; a force that restrains against that rhythm is a censor.*

3

For similar reasons, it is clear that our traditional education is a censor: our education, which Dewey has characterised by calling "an impatient, premature mechanisation . . . after the fixed patterns of adult habits." All the cults of Power which we have studied are censors: this is a manifest corollary of their nature. Business, for instance, censors the creative loyalties of its disciples from seeking worthier forms. The old religious dogmas censor the regenerative impulse of the mystic self to create new religious forms from the experience of life. The ideals of efficiency and success, externally fixed, censor the normal process of self-knowledge and of art. The obvious ban on sex details in print is a less harmful, because less effectual censorship; it is open, at least, and calls attention to what it forbids. If a book is suppressed, there is a chance that the potential reader will know the thing it was suppressed for. But almost no one is in a position to suspect that our advertisements censor the truth about the value of goods; that our news censors the truth about all world-events; that our sport-writers censor sports-

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manship; that our reviewers of books and plays censor all valid standards and perspectives about literary art; that our colleges censor research by putting a premium on immediate results; that our Constitution censors the ideal of creative governing; that our elementary education and our churches censor life itself.

4

Having established the universality of censors in a reign of Power, we should be silly to inveigh against them as if they were independent, somehow godlike tyrants possessed of their own being. They have but the force of our acquiescence—and of our *need*. And here, again, the case of the Constitution will help us understand. The clew for the diagnosis is in John Marshall, whose career became a passionate resistance to the levelling, agrarian, physiocratic notions captained by his fellow Virginian, Thomas Jefferson. America's fact was a crazy-quilt of sections; America's growth was a scattering to the Pacific; America's mystic ideal made her folk prey to all the democratic and individualistic fads of Europe. But America's *need*, because of these, was centrality in leadership of power and a rigid Code. Chief Justice Marshall stood for the need, even as his foe stood for the tendencies, the facts, the dreams. Such conflict brings neurosis. Marshall fixed on the Constitution to defend America against herself. He made it an au-

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onomous Scripture, he turned his Court into a theocratic—if godless—overlordship. When, less than a generation after his death, the Republic split, here was a continuity, a tradition, a surety to save us. After the Civil War, the trauma of that titanic discord stayed within us: our compensatory love for the Constitution grew the more exacting, since we did not know the cause. This love is truly our neurotic fear of the chaos and disharmonies within us. As such, it is real enough. All our censorships are real, because our need of them is real.

5

Even as we found that the core of our mechanical Jungle was an ideal state within us, we must know that the heart of American censorship is merely the absence of an American ethos. We have seen how and why the American is once more a beginning. We stand between two worlds, one of which cast us off so that it is no longer ours; the other of which is yet unborn so that it, too, although within us, is outside our control. Therefore, from relics of now external values we pieced together rules necessarily external, to guide and to protect us. If such rules are censors *from the standpoint of our potential growth*, they are, none the less, necessary functions of a people not yet able to live by its own spirit. The Yankee, for example, turned his old Calvinist values into a censor to restrict consciousness which would have im-

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peded the crude American business of pioneering. We, all, have had to evoke the regulations of our cultural pasts to bind us, since our actual life does not yet create within us living inner values to do that binding for us.

The means of order we took from a world that was dying: but our need was to order a world unborn within us, which must, like any embryo, be organised ere it can be born. The old order, fitted to the old, could not organically fit the new. The result was not order at all, but regimentation. Within, widened the gap between habit that belonged to the past, and impulse that yearned towards the new. Until there came social war in young America, and the torpor, the suffocation, the disillusion now upon us. Social war will come again, unless we understand the meaning of our censors. *Censorship is the one means of ordering a world that does not create its own organic order.* But organic order rises from the work of creators of concepts, of values, of art. These are the organic understanders. These, whatever they are in our America, lost beneath the blare of "practical men," are the sole practical men we have. From the experience of their experience, America may achieve an ethos which, in its turn (as Aristotle said) can alone give us laws and institutions that are not modern censors, since they will express our modern inward nature. Without an ethos, we should burn one set of censors merely to let in another. Which is to

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say that the current liberal palaver about "free speech! free press! free theatres!" is sterile. An America grown conscious of its nature and living to fulfil it will drop its censors, as a man made whole discards his crutch.

XIII: OUR LEADERS

1

FROM our definition of the censor as a man (or institution or idea) ruling externally to what is vital in a group, and hence impeding its growth and consciousness, we may deduce the leader. He is one whom others follow because his action illumines the consciousness and will of what lives integrally in them and because to act with him articulates or fulfils their life. The censor is related to the group as a master to slave or herd; men's compliance to him is an expression of their impotence, yet brings them satisfaction not alone because it makes them secure but even more because an extraneous behaviour forced on them, hides and anæsthetises consciousness of what they really want. This is why the censor is often passionately loved. The leader, by contrast, is related organically to the group as is the consciously acting mind to the instinctive.

In a reign of censorious Power, leaders are needed. But in such a world, leaders will not be found. Since our America, wholly released from the old fragmentary forms which parcelled us until the Civil War, has spread into a horizontal spilth of atoms under a shell of industrial and mannered uniformity; since, therefore, it is not an integrated body, its lack of a

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head, of a mind, of organising deed (the qualities of the leader) should not surprise us. But this does not mean that we do not act or grow. The period after Lincoln, for example, produced no political leader. Yet, as Charles and Mrs. Beard point out in "The Rise of American Civilization," much social-democratic growth took place. Such reforms as conservation, civil service, the taxing of wealth, the control of public utilities, woman suffrage, were arrived at blunderingly, unconsciously, almost inadvertently by the instinctive pressures of the American mass. The nominal leaders, even the leading parties, had such issues of advance *forced* on them: they reluctantly took them over as a means of winning votes. A similar inchoate, leaderless advance might be traced in other realms of American endeavour. America since its reduction, fifty years ago, to plasmic birth, has been advancing without leaders.

The archaic America of Sections of course had leaders. Between this lineage that includes John Cotton, Roger Williams, Jonathan Edwards, Washington, Jefferson, Calhoun, and our era of blind mass action, stands the mythic Lincoln: the true symbol of the transfiguration of a world that died with him into a world to which his death gave birth. To call the period which followed one of Reconstruction, is to be "previous": Era of Instinct would express it better.¹ The survivors of the old Americas (Whit-

¹See Chapter XV.

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man, Emerson, Melville), were but survivors of themselves. American artists were either exiles in fact, like Henry James and Whistler, or in spirit, like Ryder. The politicians were too feeble to be even first-class censors. The level of America rose blindly through leaderless social action. The Corporation, the Combine, were creators of Rockefeller, Hill and Morgan; even as the trade union was the creator of Gompers. Business grew instinctively, it had no leaders and it did not lead. Labour grew by reflex action upon capital. It was leaderless and without values. The industrial advance was as unconscious as the advance of a colony of corals. It needed unconsciousness to do, unhindered, its gross instinctive work. To this end, it revamped the myths of the old America it was devouring; hid the truth of its acts from itself under cover of an ideological mirage. Churchman, journalist, politician poured out the opiates of rhetoric and "tradition"; censors like Choate flew at reform, branding the income tax as communistic and labour unions as instruments of Satan. Censors like William Dean Howells were ready to explain the ineffable distinction between Russian men and women who sinned, and the American citizenry whose way was virtue. Occasional folk poets like Mark Twain, unable to fail to respond somewhat to the facts, censored their own confessions. The advance of labour was no whit less unconscious than that of capital. It, too, thought only of

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the problem of production which is mechanics, and ignored the problem of consumption which is consummation—value, life. It censored the truth by a similar appeal to the ideologies of an America which never had existed. Embryonic growth needs darkness. . . .

2

Now, at the century's close and the century's beginning, comes a hint of transition. No leaders emerge. But there rise figures who are not merely censors. Political leaders, in the exact sense, who proceed sincerely under the Constitution, we must not hope to find, since the Constitution itself has become a censor. When we examine men like William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, we find that their originality is not political at all; that the extent to which they qualified as politicians precisely disqualified them as leaders. The good about these men is poetic. They articulated certain pristine traits in our emotional nature. But their importance lies in the fact that by endeavouring to express these traits *in political terms* they once more brought politics into touch, however faltering, with American life. The schools of "Tsar" Reed, Mark Hanna, Platt, etc., had made themselves dissociate from the instinctive American mass in order to express the censorship of legalised property-power. The mass yearned for this guidance, but it had grown too irksome. Now

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came men who expressed not the old laws and ideologies alone, but the emotional substance which these had ceased to nourish.

Roosevelt appropriated political notions as they were forced on him. When he talked ideas, he talked dead, like his friend Lodge of Boston. But he dramatised his job, he poeticised his platitudinous thoughts. He caught up the muscle-tension, the muscle hunger, the primitive lust of spectacle and action, in American life. His strenuousness was a show; but he was the first since Jackson to make the arduous frontier into a political expression. Roosevelt was not a lawyer, he had a contempt ill-concealed for constitutional restrictions. This helped him. By lyricising the game of State with human impulse, Roosevelt promised to American life a glimpse of how politics *might* once more concern it.

Very close to him was Bryan, whose ideas also rested on an ineffable complacence.¹ Bryan's populism was as far from an organic democracy as was Roosevelt's Hamiltonianism from a true concept of the aristocratic function. As leaders, these men were singers of old ballads with pale cracked voices. But Roosevelt had embodied frontier muscle, in political form; now Bryan bespoke the dreams of the fron-

¹See the introduction of his autobiography, where he recites the beatitudes of being born to the greatest epoch of the greatest nation, of the greatest race and with the holiest religion, in all the history of the world. And see Roosevelt's autobiography for a portrait of an empty man being gradually filled, from the outside, with "progressive" standards.

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tiersman's hearth. He was the poet of numberless petty groups lost in the jungle of giant Combinations. He stood for the feminine feelings: for peace, church, grape-juice. And all that confused his childish mind—science, war, Big Business, he was shrewd enough to turn into a foe. He, too, was a lyrical figure, psalmodising in politics rather than in ballads. The frontiersman home with his wife before the twilight log understood him, shared his notions about the Devil East and, with his famelic song to rouse him, found in politics once more an emotion to express him. Fortunately for America, the appeal of these two men was not united in one person: else we might have had a perpetual dictator.

Purer but not more intelligent was the socialist Eugene Debs. His demonology of Big Business, his borrowed Marxianism, had small relation with the America where he applied them. His division of business and labour into bad and good, into "possessive" and "creative" does not bear scrutiny. He, too, was a wistful lyricist in politics. Deficient in intellectual understanding, he mirrored the Rousseauistic thirst that persists beneath the smoke of the mill. . . . Finally, there was Woodrow Wilson, the most eloquent of them all, the glozer in oleaginous verbalisms of the "messages" of these three whom for an hour he succeeded. Wilson, too, sang a song which made appeal to frontier memories. The pioneer needed muscle and sentiment—and an evangel. He could

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never so devotedly have rased his forests and accumulated money without a preacher to rationalise and to veneer his action. Woodrow Wilson, as Edmund Wilson has stated, was this preacher. And as such he gave Americans a show. Through him, they played the rôle longed for by all Americans, of rescuing crusader to benighted Europe. The rejection of his programme, the snub he received ere he had even sailed for Paris (in the congressional elections of 1918) prove that America instinctively knew Woodrow Wilson. A preacher is all right in his place. But if he leaves his pulpit to enforce his sermon in actual life, he must be rebuked—as was Wilson.

None of these men was a leader; all of them in practice served as censors. Their gestures of liberation caught the loyalty of the American folk; but within them and moving forward was no liberative method. For method of action, they were rooted in the old America, or the old world, whose deliquescence released men towards them. They took up this need to revive politics with life and cheated it with verbalisms. They led back the more censoriously, in their pretense that they were leading forward. To have made their impulse true, they would have had to re-evaluate profoundly the ideals and institutions of our country. But Roosevelt, Bryan, Wilson accepted our temporary capitalistic order as a final value! And Debs rebelled against it with conventional counters to capitalist production: with romantic gestures of

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revolt in place of fresh creative values. The impulse that does not fructify in action falls to reaction. The logical outcome, therefore, of Roosevelt-Bryan-Wilson is Harding and Coolidge: of the sentimental revolt of Debs, is the present bankruptcy of our revolutionary movement.

3

The foundations of our study make it plain why we need not look for leaders in the field of professed religion. The Neo-Thomists of France are proving that the Catholic organism still has the inertial strength to draw men into its magnificent echo. The Zionists reveal that Prophecy still lives in Israel. But in America, the old religious forms are corrupt and broken: they support censors who exploit the prestige of the pulpit to defend the habits of a class, and a few virtuosi who make the Church popular by rendering it servile to half-baked modern styles in philosophy and science. Here are no leaders. The religious energy of Protestantism and of Judaism has long since leaked from the old vessels: it will be found, pitifully disembodied, in the laboratories and the arts.

But the realm of ideas is not without contestants for leadership. We may reach some rough estimate of the general state by considering two men: Irving Babbitt and John Dewey. Professor Babbitt's te-

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tralogy, "The New Laokoön," "The Masters of Modern French Criticism," "Rousseau and Romanticism," "Democracy and Leadership," mark him as the man who with most ambition has challenged our cultural problem. His work has much to commend it for influence on young America. He criticises blind democracy, revealing the inadequate thought that underlies its tenets; he stresses the need of an aristocracy of mind and morals; he makes clear that such leadership ensues from discipline within the man according to some measure which, although human, transcends him; he is outraged by our impressionistic criticism, by our lack of standards, by our search for values in false places, by the blight of romantic self-indulgence in our politics and arts. He is alive to the splendours of certain historical traditions, and attempts to consider the mastery of Christ and Buddha, of Confucius and Socrates, in the light of their application to our present chaos. All of this, it would seem, should make him central to what is cleansing and constructive in our intellectual movements. And yet, the contrary is true. He is out of touch with what is pregnant and vital in our country; he is ignored or attacked by the men¹ who most agree with a good measure of what he says and who are intent upon the conversion from chaos to order which he desires. Something is in Babbitt which disqualifies him from

¹An exception is Gorham B. Munson, who devotes a very fair chapter to Professor Babbitt in his recent volume, "Destinations."

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leadership, which makes ineffectual his judgments and vitiates his values. The clew is in the nature of his attack—central to his exposition—on Rousseau and the Romantic. Babbitt finds Romanticism eccentric, expansive, self-indulgent, destructive of human and formal and religious experience. Every specific count he brings can be shown to be correct; yet his inquiry is invalid since he fails to understand or even to consider the causes under the symptoms he decries. Romanticism was an effect and an expression. If eccentric, it was because the centrality of Western culture was dissolving; if expansive, it was because the human spirit, dispossessed from its Catholic Body, needed to explore new realms, within and without, for the creating of a new Whole to replace the old one; if egolatrous, it was because the old “self,” rooted in the Christian synthesis of Europe, was released and thrown back upon its primitive conditions. Babbitt quotes as “perhaps the most romantic line in English” Shakespeare’s

A wild dedication of yourself
To unpath’d waters, undreamed shores.

What rigidity within him kept him from seeing that if mankind, captained by such men as Rousseau and Kant, went on this profound exploratory venture into far countries of the mind and of the earth, the reason must be something deeper than a dissatisfaction with seventeenth-century Decorum; must be,

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indeed, some shattering dislocation—some death and birth of spirit. Failure to note that the chaos, the rationalisations of the chaos, the setting up of new territories and new values were forced on man by the dissolution of the world which in organic form had held him since the Greeks; and that this decay, with consequent rebirth is the fatality of life's renewal, renders ineffectual and absurd the erudite, well wishing volumes of Babbitt. Of course, the world once more is chaos. Of course, Romanticism played its part in this ultimate atomisation of mankind and in the discovery of new elements to build with. But to emerge from this chaos, we must first accept it. For it contains all that we possess for the creating of an organic order. To reject it is to make birth impossible. Irving Babbitt has values. Actually, he has nothing, since he rejects our chaos and his refusal sterilises understanding.

4

The inwardness of this attitude is explicit in two influential writers who, although unconsciously, are disciples of Babbitt. His traditionalism, his nostalgia for a state in which past decorum and past measures may again prevail, his utter inability to cope with our chaotic world in order to *create* it and his consequent frantic effort to turn back from chaos to a traditional Form whose dissolution was compelled

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by the forms of modern thought—provide mood, and some doctrine to T. S. Eliot. The nostalgic plaint against Romanticism of Babbitt begets this romantic. But there is another side to the Professor: the hurler of epithets, the brash objurgator of mobs and of their follies. If this man adores Socrates, Jesus, Buddha, he has won from them no grace and no sweetness; but chiefly an invidious contrast to the despised America of Henry Ford. This vituperative side of Babbitt comes to its logical extreme in Mencken. When Mencken calls us names, it is true he quotes Nietzsche rather than Plato; he drinks not Falernian wine but *Lager Bier*. Yet he is a mood, poeticised, of Professor Babbitt. Both Mencken and Eliot are romantic poets. Alongside the prophetic giants of the Romantic era—Beethoven, Blake, Cézanne, Whitman—were the weak-brothers whose heaven was no projection of titanic hunger, but a wistful return to some delusive past. With them belong these two “leaders.” If their work denotes any true grappling with reality, any recreation or transfiguration, I have missed it. They personify the fate, in a bewildering world, of the learned gentleman at Harvard who thinks that he can exorcise our devils by naming their symptoms and by invoking Aristotle and Confucius in a society that has lost every form, social, religious, psychological, which produced them.

These men are at war with the flux of our world, and this is good. But the flux is the decay of the

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Mediterranean Whole that held from Aristotle to Aquinas. They crave, without knowing it, perhaps, the surety and immobility of Wholeness; and this is good. But wholeness is an achievement from *within* the chaos, the realisation of the life of chaos. Babbitt and his disciples would cure our chaos, not by grasp and integration; but by a negative check on the forces quick within it and by harking back to a form of wholeness whose materials decomposed because they no longer could withstand these forces. Recreation means the entering of some fresh germinal element into matter made inchoate by previous death. Romanticism was the search for this fresh force. The democratic movements which revived the masses, and the discoveries of science and of navigation, were kindred quests. They, too, were romantic. Romanticism *is* exploration. We shall get beyond it only by accepting what it has brought and made us.

5

Unlike Professor Babbitt, John Dewey is in no rigid and excluding opposition to the American flux. His matter and method reveal a profound acceptance; indeed, the younger generation (myself included) have attacked him on the ground that he accepted too lovingly the chaos of our world to lead us from it. Criticism of the master who has produced such works as "Democracy and Education," "Human

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Nature and Conduct," "Experience and Nature"—the one intellectual master in our country—must be reverently careful. Dewey has far more than prone acceptance. He has understanding. His works on education, on social and natural psychology, are prolegomena of all future discourse on these subjects. His critique of the Greek systems in the light of modern science is our intellectual climate. His analysis of body, mind, consciousness, conduct, in the manifold of life is classic. No one with more cogency than he has given texture to the Spinozistic pattern, to "the fact," in his own words, "that consciousness is not a separate realm of being but is the manifest quality of existence when nature is most free and most active."¹ This he has done by demonstration of the interplay of matter, percept, idea, act, from atom and sensum to mankind: an unbroken synthesis in which each detail is explicit of all others. He knows the world we live in. His work is sensitive to his own intricate perception; and I cannot feel with Lewis Mumford that the line-for-line texture of his style is "fuzzy and formless" or to be compared with that of Theodore Dreiser. Dreiser writes like a befuddled child who compensates by fixity on detailed facts—the one kind of thing he can be sure of. Mr. Dewey at his best writes like a man whose sight is a prism, not of colours but of desensualised relations.

¹All that is not noise or nonsense in the dogmas of John B. Watson will be found in Dewey. Of course, the laboratory methods of Behaviourism are as old as experimental psychology.

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. . . And in this distillation to which his scrutiny refines all percepts, there are values. By value I mean simply a *spiritual percept*, and I say "spirit" in the sense of Dewey. ("Soul," he writes, "is form, spirit informs. . . . Spirit quickens, it is not only alive but spirit gives life.") Dewey has values, when he unmasks the "usefulness" whereby we justify most of our modern actions, and finds it futile; or when he detects the capitalistic bias in Karl Marx. He has values, when he defines art as the consummation of nature and experience, making it include thinking, science, knowledge, truth. His entire philosophy, being one of immanence—immanence of end and aim in act, of habit and impulse in thought, of thought in conflict, of art in labour, of the social in the personal, of realisation in process—is a philosophy of value. His implication of a "social soul," of a "community of religious feeling" is indeed not so far from Emerson and Hegel as he might state it. Finally, his work in education is an expounding of value; for its outset is to attack the proverbial notion that childhood's value is extrinsic or merely instrumental to the vested value of manhood.

And yet, in terms of our condition, which is chaos; and of our need which is to create *with it* a Whole that shall lose no potential value, John Dewey fails as a leader. The reason is that he himself does not *experience* the organic unity of life as emergent from chaos. He knows about it intellectually, it is implied

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in his values. He has the *percept* of this Wholeness, but it is not transmuted into conscious experiential vision. He is like a man who "senses" light but whose organising power is so dim that he cannot see the sun; its rays are a *vague permeation of his darkness*. To see is to order. The principle of order is to unify a heterogeneity of things. The method of order is to give these things a focus; and the result of order is *form*. Dewey discusses the values of wholeness; he throws light on the relations between events indispensable for ordering them. But his work remains a mere inorganic sequence. He does not focus it with his own organic vision; he does not form it into an organic body. Despite his constant discussion of relations between act, consciousness, imagination, he does not validate the rôle of form in the process of relation. Therefore, his own spiritual percepts fail in imaginative being, and in the consciousness of his readers. Infallibly this default of the final step—the focussing, the embodying, the *life-giving* consummation, enfeebles what he has to give us. Thus, when he writes of creative art, he does not allow for the *forming* impulse—the power emerging in an organic body to create fresh organic bodies from miscellaneous materials and events; and he can speak of business men and of inventors as "creative artists," despite the crucial lack of form in their arrangements. Thus, in his analyses of self into objective components, he makes no place for the indispensable *nucleus that*

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composes—the focus of construction: he establishes no abiding centre, without which there can be no principle of conduct or of growth, and, indeed, no fulcrum of leverage at all within the immediate flux. He refuses to hierarchise his “truths and revelations.” “Immediately,” he writes, “nothing is better or worse than anything else: it is just what it is”—a statement that proves his inability to think except in a temporal series. For in such a series, of course, the immediate is only “just what it is”; no thing can be brought up with which to compare it, except out of the past or future, which would destroy its immediate nature. But for a mind whose experience is an organic form, the immediate contains the whole, including the temporal sequence: the immediate *this* can hence be hierarchised in value according to its function in the whole. To Dewey, the religious sense must be set *as a sense* on terms of precise equality with a sense of heat. Any hierarchy of value becomes indirect and pragmatic. Experience is molecularised by his inorganic treatment so as to betray his own values. In calling such values as “permanence, real essence, totality, order, unity, rationality” *predicates*, he is of course empirically just, and critically right in so far as he is refuting transcendental systems. But metaphysically he is superficial, since he does not connect predicate with subject. Again he is failing to fulfil his organism, leaving the world a mere sequential chaos, and man dangling in the accidence of his own behaviour.

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Thus, he stresses the precariousness of life; life he finds "a gamble," as of course it is in every mediate term. But he ignores the immediate certainty which the organic sense of the Whole brings to the precarious flux. To Dewey, this sense of the whole is a mere predicated, pragmatic value; the universal, to him, is instrumental to the immediate: and "the immediate," he declares, "is always the dubious." But to the man whose experience is organic the immediate is equally instrumental to the universal: the immediate is *saturated with the whole*, and is therefore the contrary of dubious. Immediate and eternal, in true integration, are two words for unitary recognition. Lacking this organic form, Dewey's presentation of the flux is vivid; his appeal to order is vague, unformed, remote.

The instances which I have given, and which could be multiplied at will, of course do not present his doctrine: they point, I believe fairly, to its tendency and hence to its effect in leadership within a condition of chaos, such as ours. Dewey is always under the flux. His understanding of it is amazing. But his values of resistance to its blind momentum whirl in the flow they are "designed" to master. He goes to incredible lengths to "save the situation." Thus he tries to shift the problem of philosophy from *what* to *how*; and yet it is difficult to see the sense of *how* until the *what* is established. Failing to integrate an order in which values might live, he tries to refuse the

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problem altogether by making all substance merely instrumental. But he is betrayed by the vague terms of fulfilment to which he is constantly resorting: "refreshment and renewal," "new ends and acts," etc.—terms that fail, precisely because of their lack of *whatness*, and that exasperate since he does not define them, nor indeed allow the philosophic right to define them.

Dewey has shown the futility of percepts to change events, when there is no control of causal means. He quotes the experiments of F. M. Alexander, who has admirably proved that the average modern man cannot so much as *stand straight* without a total re-education of bodily kinesthesia. Thereby, Dewey disqualifies mere moralists and preachers (including Irving Babbitt with his endless iteration of "inner check" and "decorous tradition"). But also Mr. Dewey disqualifies himself. The control of any series of events means that it is ordered, made whole. When the series is an animal body, this work may be instinctive. In human life, it must be conscious. The roots of consciousness are the imagination. There can be no experience of the wholeness of life without imaginative vision. Here John Dewey is not equal to his task. Although he says "consciousness, as far as it is not dull ache or torpid comfort, is a thing of the imagination," he fails to make use of this principle. He relies on intelligence, which he defines as contingent on the process that must be controlled. But it is hard

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to see how the intelligence can supply the principle of integration, unless it is fed by an imagination of the Whole which is subject as well as predicate within the flux.

The consequence of this imaginative lack is not mere theory: it is a fact. The organic wholeness unfulfilled in Dewey is unfulfilled in his books, which do not present a living body for his readers. Like the world which they describe, they are full of a number of things. And like that world again, these many things remain an inorganic chaos.¹ He whose work is chaos is not a leader from chaos.

We might approach Dewey's failure from another angle: that of his most assured success. In primary education, he has been a leader. The reason is, that when he writes of the child, he has organic vision. He sees the child, not within an "enveloping whole" (as he sees man, thereby proving the externality of his conception of wholeness), but *as an adumbrating whole*. The child's life and values are intrinsic; as such he wants them to expand into organic fulfilment. The fulfilment is imaginatively experienced by Dewey. Therefore, as an educator, his words have body, they have spirit; they create experience in other educators, and he leads them. His feeling for

¹This possibly explains why Dewey's books are such hard reading. In the work even of clumsy writers like Kant or Hegel, the arduous task of following the dialectic is compensated for by the organic vision of the author. This vision infects every sentence, excites and spurs one on. The lack of organic wholeness brings an isolatedness to Dewey's pages of philosophy, and makes it far easier to set them down than to take them up.

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the child as an evolving whole is like the religious man's imagination of mankind, in the sense that Dewey finds within the child forces that may transfigure, and is moved, himself, into an attitude of passionate service. But his sense of man fails to rise to this pitch. He cannot see man whole, because he fails to find the nucleus of focus, of organisation, of timeless subject-value, and of transformation, within the self. He is himself a child of chaos, and his works are chaos.

These last statements mark his worth, no less than his failure. John Dewey, for all his intricate mental power, is an American primitive. Within him, as in Emerson, lie all the values of Western culture. But in Emerson, they were turned nostalgically from the present to a paradise, which was the crepuscular glow of a dead day. Emerson is a last, a very old European. In Dewey, the chaos of values has a new direction: it is earthward, it is forward, it is primarily concerned with methods of expression. Therefore, Dewey is a first, a very young American. For this is what America must mean: a beginning that contains all the old human ends and redirects them into a fresh, live Body. The organism is not in this man; but the direction is there. And it is just to liken John Dewey to a child; since in him, as in the child, are all the elements of life, yet not made conscious, not organised for fulfilment. The Whole of religion—the cosmic Self—is not the child's: yet the child's activity

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of power, self-expression, manipulation of events is the route towards this Whole. Dewey's leadership in child education is a symbol. He is not a leader of maturity: but he is a token of the life of our promise.

6

To name an American in whom is the essence of leadership as I define it, I must leave the scale of national figures, the medium of ideas; and converge on personal experience. Alfred Stieglitz has been a great force in the lives of Americans through the fact that *his life* is a sheer articulation of his values.¹ Not words, not a philosophy at all, inform these values; they are made whole by their enactment in private contact with persons. Those who have been moved by Stieglitz are men largely in love with the transfigured world that stirs in the womb of American discontent; they have come so far, at least, that the old concepts and forms no longer hold them. This dispossession drives them to the making of new forms, to the "apocalyptic arts" which I have mentioned. Now, Stieglitz is a kind of proto-citizen of this unborn world. His every-day responses to the American scene have a light from that unspoken dawn; they are linked intimately with our chaos and yet some force moves them obliquely from it, as if a previsioned Order were alive within them. It is this that makes him

¹Another such must be Alexander Meiklejohn, former President of Amherst and now at the University of Wisconsin. But I do not know Meiklejohn well enough to discuss his leadership.

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“queer” to the citizens of chaos; that makes him to certain others a witness in the flesh of what their spirit discarnately projects. . . . Compare him with Socrates and you will understand the embryonic quality that is his high importance. Socrates also was surrounded by young men. But there were between them and him a common intellectual ground, a group of articulated symbols, moral, political, æsthetic, which he could use to link their life with his love. All Athens, indeed, could come close enough (in disagreement) to his values, to execute him for them. But in a world where common concepts have rotted from the real, where there can be no conceptual idiom of spiritual exchange, the true word can only be *a life*. Such a life (there may of course be many others) is Stieglitz. And so far as this, has leadership advanced in the embryography of the new American world. With the final chapter, where the ultimate technic of creating America will be seen to narrow down to the practical technic of creating creative persons, the prophetic importance of such a life as Stieglitz will appear, in retrospect, more clearly.¹

¹I am fully aware that what I have written of Stieglitz will have meaning only to those who already know him. And yet it is equally impossible, in a study such as this, either to portray him or to leave him out. What I wish to convey is that here is a man outside all verbalisms: a man whose life is the image of a kind of wholeness: and that through such a personal incarnation only, can we begin to realise the wholeness which our arts and deeds may integrate at last into an American life. For views of Stieglitz, see Paul Rosenfeld's "Port of New York," Sherwood Anderson's "Note-Book," No. XLVII of *Camera Work* (January, 1915), in which, under the caption, "What Is 291?" his Socratic leadership is discussed by sixty-seven artists and poets; and "Our America," by Waldo Frank.

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7

From a composite picture of what these men have and lack as leaders, I may send forward a suggestion of the constructive aim of this book. What we require of leadership is clearly the integration of our chaos: its re-birth into organic life by the introduction within it of a fresh germinal force. To this end, first of all, the chaos must be accepted; then, understood and transfigured. To accept is the work of spirit: to understand is the work of mind: to transfigure is the work of art. The American leader must be moved by a religious love in order to accept this chaos—a love like that of Moses, of Jesus; for only in this spirit can he make one and whole the world's deliverance with his own. The American leader must have intellectual mastery of the elements, cultural and technical, that enter in this chaos, for only so equipped can he understand the intricate pasts and presents and futures that America consists of. The American leader must have the imagination of the Whole, for only so can he achieve the method for work within the chaos, to organise it and to transform it.

This is to say that the American leader, in his life and deeds if he be a man of action, in his life and works if he be a formal artist, must himself create an organic Whole from our chaos. Such a Body, as example and experience, will enter the life of our young men, and will lead them.

PART THREE:
THE CREATING OF A PEOPLE

XIV: OUR WOMEN

1

IN order to clear ground for our examination of the state of the American folk, we should consider certain myths about American women: myths that distort them from their actual place within the folk and conceal them even from themselves.

(1) It is said that American women are exceptionally independent, and that the reason for this is the industrial revolution. Since in the nineteenth century it became the mode to explain everything by economics, women were not spared. They were going into shop and office: why look farther? But men also were going into shop and office; and even the most rabid environmentalist would concede that the new job did not in fifty years transform utterly a nature moulded by eons. It brought out some traits, it thwarted others: man was still man: why, then, was woman not still woman? In France and Germany, women also went into the new industrial work. If the cause of the nature of the modern woman was peculiarly economic, a *dactylographe* in Paris should closely resemble a stenographer in New York. The truth is otherwise. The *midinette* of the rue de la Paix, the linen-worker of Lyons, are closer to the *grande dame* of Bourgogne than to the femi-

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nine bread-winner of the United States. Moreover, the traits that single the American woman from her Continental sisters are shared by the American woman of wealth, the American daughter of leisure, the American teacher, the American farmer's wife, no less than by the girl in American industry and commerce. American women have America in common, all that America means in social, psychological and physical terms. And French women have France in common. Moreover, women have always been in industrial work. The work, rather than women's share in it, has shifted. If women work less in the home because work has moved from the home, this is true also of men. To judge the men of a land in the whole context of their world, and to judge the women who share that world, by a few special causes, is silly and romantic. Many of our hard-headed interpreters of women are closer to the minor poet who sings of woman as a Thing Apart, not wholly human, than they would like to be told. Since girls in a modern Paris office feminise that office into something redolent of old France, and since girls in an American office do not feminise it at all, clearly the office and the fact that girls are in it are not the crux of the matter.

(2) Equally ill-founded is the claim that the strength of Puritanism in America, of sex-censorships and personal prohibitions, is due to women. The ideals of Puritanism were established in Europe by

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men, because of reasons closest to men; they were re-established in America by men; they were nurtured or transformed by pioneering which was the job of the men. The ideals of Puritanism are not alone a man's concept of the world; they are hostile to women. It is not natural for woman to disdain the senses and the body; to be transcendental. It is abhorrent to her to repugn sex, to seek values in the hereafter, to slight this life in mystical evasions. Nor is it natural for woman to be a restless pioneer, to disdain the soil, to idealise motion and change. Women in America are no more responsible for Puritanism than were the nuns of Castile for Catholicism. In both cases, they adjusted to a situation. And whatever organic resistance Puritanism has met in the United States has been due in large part to women. While pioneering, Puritanism's ally, was the cry of the land, woman's aloofness from its alien ideals was overcome by her need to conform. As soon as conditions allowed, her veritable nature—the nature, indeed, of any woman loosed from the bond of man-made culture—spoke: she showed herself emotionally honest, spiritually childlike, sexually alert. The clear, unconsciously rebellious savage whom we call the flapper may stand for the essential woman of America, left unchastened and uncultivated in our stockaded towns and at last released by the fall of the stockades.

So much for Puritanism. Our sex-censorships are

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natural results of American democratic rule. If the people is sovereign, you will have laws that reflect its nerves and temper; the crowd will be a constant atmosphere; the crowd will be, psychologically, *always present*. Now what is the average American's reaction to sex? He considers it a private matter. Therefore, since in our world the crowd is a dominant presence, there will be the dominant, constant impulse towards sex-prohibitions. This is no more the work of our women, than the American attitude towards nakedness. Sex-candor in art and letters requires an aristocracy so secure in its own rights, that it does not feel nor heed the masses around it; or it requires a folk equally secure—a folk like the French, who have been so soundly organised by a millennium of common culture that sex as a disruptive force does not exist for it.¹

(3) The popular notion that our land is a matriarchy, that in spirit and culture women rule us, is not alone false—it is ironic. If the American woman has been forced by the conditions of our Jungle to become an agent of masculine behaviour, to accept ideals that corrode her strength, to live a life that belittles her home, to imitate man and always in subaltern ranks; if her struggle for a place has pushed

¹Of course, I do not go deeply into this problem here, since my purpose is only to absolve women of an unjust accusation. It would be simple to show that in a people with no true social sense, sex is private and hence not socially allowed; in a true society, like France, sex is both intimate and social and hence a pleasant subject for relaxed community feeling. The superficiality of our tirades against sex-censorship should be clear to my readers.

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her into man's business, man's politics, man's art, where is her rulership? Is it logical to say that women are strong in a land where men have forced them to act as if they were replicas of men? There is probably no country in the world where woman has had less chance to be woman, less cogency as woman, where she has been so entirely on the defensive; and where the re-establishment of woman in her organic rôle is so sorely needed, as in ours, for the fulfilment of the folk. This false idealising of the American woman's "might" (in her heart she detests it) is the American man's compensation for his failure *to let his woman live*; a failure from which he suffers as a man. The cure for all this nonsense, with which distinguished visitors and lecturers regale us, is to see what happened to women in our forming world. . . .

2

She was a good mate to her man. She cleared rocks and forests. She fought disease, trekked the continent in a covered wagon. She followed her man, and saved him. Of herself, she never would have come to America at all. The energy released from the Christian Synthesis of Europe had masculine forms; it stirred in the blood of her man and made *him* inventor, discoverer, protestant, pioneer. She, more conservative and faithful, would not have uprooted her old home and her altars. The wilderness was more

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alien to woman, because the forces dissident from her European hearth were less clamant within her. Once here, she struggled to remake her home. Religion and morals became important in her life, because they were the strongest hold she had on her man, the strongest links she had preserved from the synthesis she had abandoned. Religion and morals became to the American woman a will-expression, a tool at hand. They were real to her man; therefore by means of them she tried to touch him. Ethical and mystic tenets were incidental, although, of course, they worked on her. If they were alien to her flesh, they yet were of use to her flesh; for they helped her make a home in a chaotic world; helped her cement a desperate connection with her child whom the frontier snatched all too soon from her lap. She used religion as a builder of a house uses mortar. *The house* concerned her.

Arduous it was for her to make her home in an outpost, where displacement was a wind constantly blowing through her windows—blowing all she loved away. But this was the mere surface of her trial. The American pioneer was an insufficient lover. Not because he was in love with the tasks of clearing the continent: there were far deeper causes without which such superficial ones would not have counted. The essence of his failure as a lover of his woman lay in his very issuance from Europe.

We have studied the process of atomisation that

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made the American man a particle of Power—a driving instrument of action and self-will. Love we have defined as the principle of union, of order, of creation—the act whereby the two or the many become one; and Power is the imposition of a self on any object by destruction or absorption—the principle of chaos. *Any man whose impulse is Power is a bad lover.* For how can a man make love, who does not love? Now in Europe, man and woman had made a whole. That whole was ideally the Christian Body of the world: practically, it was the home. Perhaps husband and wife were temperamentally unsuited; perhaps their parents had designed the match for external reasons: all this was as naught compared with the value and the suggestive force of the symbolic whole of marriage. Man and woman fulfilled each other in this union, as all men and all women fulfilled each other in the union of the Church. Even an unhappy marriage was real; its misery was a means of fulfilment, because its principle was love. Adultery meant what it said: an adulteration of a veritable whole. And in such an atmosphere of wholeness, where sex symbolised the pattern of the Church and the Church actualised the union of the sexes, man could *love* his woman. Even to-day in Europe, the cultural dissolution has not gone so far as altogether to delete this atmosphere of wholeness; woman is not deprived of love's nurture. And that is why German women who work in factories are very like their mothers who

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worked in kitchens; why the *stenos* of Paris feminise the office, even as their French sisters the homes and the arts.

But in America, the dissolution was more perfect: America, which we have seen as the advance form—in one aspect—of Europe's deliquescence. Man here was indeed the fragment, the child and the maker of chaos: the instrument of Power, not of Love. Along with the greater Whole, marriage faded. Indeed, Protestantism's acceptance of divorce prophesies this dissolution. (Divorce becomes common, adultery becomes a meaningless word, where marriage is debauched into a mere personal or Power contract.) The pioneer no longer found fulfilment in his wife. He was a particle of the chaotic flux, of America's manifest destiny of expansion. He needed a woman, of course: to use her. She and her family were now a means: the end was Power, which is endless.

The way of woman in this process was tragic. Since her man did not fulfil her, as a creative being she was not fulfilled. She is biologically closer to love than he, her body confines her energy to courses less versatile and mobile. She suffered more manifestly (though not more really) than her man, in this lack. She was bereft, and she grew frantic. America was this masculine world of moving particles of Power: she had to follow into the masculine chaos.

So we return to Power. Woman became what she must, in a reign of Power. She went after her man:

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she went outside herself to be like her man—to win from herself what she had always gotten from the man she had lost. *Self-fulfilment*—the fallacy of Power. There begins the spectacle of women who worship self, since their men worship self: of men and women turned from one another and hence barred from the sole true self-fulfilment which is the union of the self with another self, of the one with the world. The men had their outset in the nucleus of their own personal will; they were immature, yet they were beginnings of men. But the women began by doing violence to their nature, by taking men's will as their outset.

Since the world in which they were now launched was a world of men, they tried to become as men. In the professions and the arts, they imitated men; in business, they worked for men. And in the home, they struggled vainly against the depreciation of home values. It was "in the air" of a Power-pioneer world that personal service is inferior to work in a mill, that feeding a child is less of a job than feeding a machine, that material production is more important than spiritual consummation, that the creating of an æsthetic—of a religious whole in the home, with human lives as integers, is less "artistic" than scribbling verse. Thus, our women became poor cooks, unsatisfactory wives, neurotic mothers. The centre of education shifted from the hearth, which is its normal focus, to the school, where it does not belong. For-

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mal education was forced, by this bankruptcy of the home, to undertake excessive burdens. But even here, the women were not leaders.

For reasons we have noted, they had adapted, as a means for salvaging their home, the tool of morals and religion. The tool was soon familiar to their hands: now that their creative work at home was dwindling, they used this tool as a weapon—destructively, aggressively, to sterilise the world, since they were sterile. Natural priestesses of sex and of bodily joy, they warred against the joy they could not have.

3

This was the era in which American woman courted man. It was a courtship doomed to failure. And it is closing. All the fictions about her “cultural influence,” about her “matriarchy,” could not keep the American woman from learning that no pursuit of man on *his* terms, no cult of Power, brings the indeputable nourishment of love. This she has learned not intellectually and not consciously, but as an organism linked through generations learns the way of survival. She had raised settlements, careened in crazy wagons; she had crusaded against vice and atheism; she had trimmed her curves to fit into man’s machines, and broken the lilt of her desire to meet his rationalisation of what he desired to give her; she had fought with man for a share of his political baubles

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and for a place with him in the cult of money. And the organic lesson she has learned stands fleshed—magnificently fleshed—in the American girl of to-day. The feminist movement is dead. Woman reverts to the sources of her womanhood: to a new, hard, shrewd, unsentimental *femaleness*. She is an atom: from the fruit of the experience of her mothers, comes this seed of a folk. She is pure of the old seasons, purer than man, readier to dawn. Man cannot win her by tugging the old chords of sentiment, tradition, law—chords himself has cut. He must begin, to meet her beginning. And it may be that the first step in the creation of a Whole from our American chaos will be the union of man with this new Eve who was not formed from his rib. . . .

XV: OUR FOLK

1

A PEOPLE is a loose organism, joined by earth and air, by ancestor and neighbour. It can divide without death, and even in an alien whole of earth and air and nurture, it can persist for a time. The peoples of Europe sent fragments of themselves across the sea. These fragments were disaffected, else they would not have gone; and their dissidence from the whole of Europe could only grow in the alien American world. Yet it is fair to say that our colonials were peoples of Europe.

When a people speaks of its spirit, it often uses the dubious word "race." "Race will tell," "blood is thicker than water," etc., are slogans to express the will of a people to incarnate its spirit, as if it were something absolute of the blood and of the physical structure. A people gladly forgets—more accurately, remains unconscious—that it is, like any animal, a product, contingent and shifting, of the life wherein it is immersed; that with this life it changes; that what it calls "race" is the focus of what sea and rain and foe and food have worked within its flesh. "Race," therefore, is an admirable word to express the separatistic self-consciousness of a people; its

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primitive desire to be autonomous and alone. However illusory, "race" is real enough. Like the illusory "self" of the child, it also holds much loveliness, much creativity, together with the naked lust for Power. Like the sense of self in the child, the sense of "race" can grow into the true sense of the Whole. This consummation is a religious Culture; and few races have attained it. "Race," then, although itself an integration and an end, may be a beginning.

2

The precise tale of the decay of European peoples and of racial cultures in the first four American centuries has not been told. Perhaps, when it is, the era 1840-1860 will mark a turning. Until about that time, the inertial forces held from Europe. Traditional forms of thought and of behaviour persevered, and made resistance against the nature of the American world. In American leaders, these "race" elements and this "race" resistance were plain. From Cotton to Calhoun, from Hooker to Jefferson, from Winthrop to Washington and Webster, racial strains of the old world fought and prevailed against the inevitable doom. This is why men of foreign birth, like Hamilton and Paine, could be American leaders: and why leadership was hostile to the frontier where the death of Europe advanced more swiftly through the more urgent pressure of American conditions. Now

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comes the change. "Race" as continuity to be preserved is on the defensive, and gradually leadership in America turns race-destructive. The ideal impulse, for example, in Abolition is anti-racial. Slavery meant the hermetic sealing of an alien people in the American world. At its deepest level, Abolition tried to say: Let the black race flow with the rest into the American chaos. "Leaves of Grass" went farther, for it preached the rise from this chaos of an American race. Emerson, Alcott, Margaret Fuller, were still members of European peoples, but all their doctrine was race-suicidal. Thoreau and Melville, like Whitman, moved towards an individual assertion that was bound to scatter the old racial Sections. Such leadership was still for the minority; these were not popular figures. The violent resistance to Abolition in the North cannot be explained on economic grounds; it was the passionate clairvoyance of "race" scenting a doctrine of destruction.

These same years marked the birth of the American folk. The folk is the stuff of a people; it is not a people, even as live plasm is not an animal. America begins to crystallise into folk ways; to put forth folk figures. The process is already plain in Andrew Jackson. Heretofore, the pioneer—atom released from the peoples of Europe—had not been admitted as the American ideal. Franklin, Sam Adams, Washington, Jefferson, were not pioneers. There was no worship of Daniel Boone in the seats of power. Jackson

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was not a pure folk figure. He was a county squire of England doubled with a pioneer. But the important thing about him was what the nascent folk made with him. In the glow of John Quincy Adams, "race" leadership was setting; and the folk, content heretofore to rule the dark frontier, now turned as in birth and stormed the open places. It took from Jackson what was like itself: for the first time the coonskin cap was an important fetish. And so great was this rise that the sea-board powers—the homes of "race" dominion—were forced to duplicate the folk appeal of Jackson: hence the apocrypha of Davy Crockett.

The "best voices," like the "best people," were still in the decorous tradition of the peoples of Europe. Irving, Cooper, Paulding, Brown, Simms and Legaré enjoyed more prestige than the radicals of Concord. Webster, Sumner, Everett and Calhoun, all of whom followed the leadership of Burke, held the eyes if not the mind of the land, with their sky-rocket finales to "race" dominion. Even when Lincoln was elected, the old order, personified in such survivors as Chase and Seward, thought to whip their brothers in the South—Lee, Jeff Davis, Alexander Stephens—without loss of their mutual race patrimony. They were wrong. In fighting each other, they fulfilled their own destruction. The Era of Instinct which their death ushered in, which Grant personified and to which Greeley with his locomotor slogan "Go

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West, Young Man" gave articulation, marked the first life-stage of the American folk.¹

3

From now on, the fragments of old peoples, even newly arrived, die swiftly in America. We have no more Africans: not because of the miscegenation of slavery days, but because Africa—the whole that made the African—was gone. The child of the immigrant comes to be ashamed of his mother tongue, which links him with "race." Teuton, Slav, Latin, accept the myth of the melting-pot. The Jew adopts reform versions of his racial culture, that delete race—making Judaism a system of neutral morality and ethics.² The dominant "Nordics" subtly shift their values. They do not yet speak of an American race, but more and more they feel their apartness from the peoples of Britain.

What evidence is there that a new folk was born? It was an infant and its behaviour was on an infant

¹Obviously, the psychologic chart of a nation will not perfectly synchronise with the historic events that symbolise its stages. Dates are bound to overlap: the growth of a people is not more temporally precise than the growth of a person. Thus the Era of Instinct of the new American folk, which has its chief symbols in Grant and the masters of the great railroads, may be said to have begun just after the Mexican adventure and the discovery of gold in California. It starts before the Civil War which symbolises the death of the old Americas. The new folk was being born, before the old racial and sectional Americas had dissolved.

²In the case of the Jew, an analogous but not similar condition existed in Western Europe, and analogous adaptations by "reform" took place.

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level: it fed itself and it spread itself. But surely, since men had settled on American shores, this had been the way of their lives? Now, there is a difference that marks the birth. Like adults, Americans had had other occupations beyond feeding and spreading: they had had ideals, programmes, literature; they had had what their leaders gave them, and this had conformed with the old race-cultural traditions. The standards of men like Williams, Hooker, Penn gave to the pioneer a rationale beyond his nutritive act. Later came lords like Washington and Jefferson, Madison and Morris to captain the instinctive labour of the masses. There had been an old-world head to the new-world body: therefore, the body was not formed, the folk was not born. But with Grant, all this changed. The head, now, was on the level of the folk: the head was *of* the folk. Grant's faith in unscrupulous men of money was perhaps a symbol of the American folk's acceptance of life lived entirely in nutriment and expansion. Men like Fiske, Gould, Astor, Vanderbilt, the sachems of Tammany, Rockefeller, Harriman and Hill replaced the American masters. And they were of the stomach, of the limbs of the folk. In this folk, as in any infant, belly and hands were the rulers. Weavers of wealth and rails replaced weavers of rhetoric and theologic law. All that is commonly called "decadence" in the spiritual and intellectual life of the period of Reconstruction was the disappearance of our heritage from Europe

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—death of a long dying culture and birth of a cultureless folk. That is why this period should be called the Era of Instinct.

One does not expect a newborn folk to find full voice. There had been voices from another world—the transplanted world of Europe—to predict this birth; and prophets, creators of values for the folk to absorb when it came of age. But the folk's chief business was to discover its body, feed its flesh, solidify its bones. No wonder it ignored Whitman, misunderstood Poe, turned Emerson into an ornament. Captains of business best expressed it. In Mark Twain, it had the nearest approach to a folk literary figure. His very name, redolent of navigation on the Mississippi, places him. He was a product of the forces of expansion; and all his life he adored them. He was a friend of business men, he was close—too close—to their values. But there was conflict in him. Old cultural strains hungered for decorum and for spiritual beauty. He spent his career in a confusion between acceptance of the American folk epic and dismay at its results. He did not know enough to be a critic, nor see enough to be a satirist: "race" was too weak in him and folk too strong. In most of his books, this confusion made havoc. But in the tales about the River, the folk child moves free; and "Huckleberry Finn" is a pæan in praise of pure animal motion. This tale of a boy drifting with the Father of Waters, between shores that strew the relics

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of old worlds, is the first great tale of the American folk.

Fifty years—roughly, 1860 to 1910—enact the story of Huckleberry Finn. The folk child is wholly given up, from head to foot, to its physical career. The expansion of the West, the laying down of rails, the rise of Capital and Labour, the perfection of machines, the sensualisation of politics, the haphazard self-indulgent arts—all are the adventures of a lusty folk adrift on the titanic Current.

4

Now, with the turn of the century, a new will grows evident: the folk is striving to become a people with that beginning consciousness of self, intense, homogeneous, separate, absolute, which we call "race." Beneath the shell of business, law and state, swarms our American Jungle. The motor runs smooth, the road runs smooth; but the five who speed along the concrete ribbon are in chaos. In each, the good, the right, beauty, pleasure, duty, comfort, service, and ambition are tangents of habit and desire knocking against each other. The constellation of these tangents in each breast flares against each other breast. This is chaos, and for men and women unbearable. Take this chaos of each family of five motoring so smoothly and so swift, multiply it by millions, clamp upon it the ironic order of our roads, our

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cars, our *Shell*—and you have the neurosis, the insanity, the crime, the torpor, the hardness, the despairing youth that underlie the rhetoric of the American nation. You will understand why the American folk hungers to be a people.

For a people gets along, being an organic, rhythmic body. It is adjusted to its world, being a pattern of reflexes to the world's conditions. If America can make itself a homogeneous people, if it can adopt one set of habits to cog with its desire and to groove into the earth that feeds it—if it can be conscious of itself alone, believe in itself alone, it will not need to think; it can sleep. . . .

America's will to be this sort of elementary people devises many methods. Here are a few:

(1) Levelling in theory: 100 per cent Americanism, Ku Klux Klanism, Colonialism. Social levelling: stamping out, segregation, subtle discouragement of dissident ethnic groups such as Indian, Negro, Latin, Slav and Jew.

(2) Levelling of the individual: Machine-worship, professional optimism, value placed in homogeneous behaviour, stress laid on conformity, distrust of the original and creative in thought and art. Protection from this, by extolling what is superficially novel, elegant, and reflective. Choice of heroes who are "like every day." Normalcy. Apotheosis of the rubber stamp and of the popular.

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(3) Levelling of manners and custom by sumptuary laws. Prohibition, whose essential strength is not its attitude towards alcohol, but its symbolisation of the will of the masses to regiment the many, the few and the one: to legislate uniformity of habit. Censorship, which is simply the prerogative control of a "sovereign" folk—the enforcing of a crowd attitude on such "private matters" as sex and discussion.

(4) External stabilising and levelling of population. Exclusion of Orientals. Restriction of immigration, in order to hasten the process of "setting." Barring of minority groups. Since the dominant race memory of the dominant part of our folk is "Nordic," it naturally suspects (and rightly) that all alien memories will complicate this process of "setting."

(5) The cult of arts that are apologetic of mass-sentiment, and panegyric of instinctive mass behaviour. For instance: Jazz. We have seen (in Chapter XI) that jazz is a rhythmic response to a world of machines and of machine-methods: that it is a response superficially self-assertive and organically reflective: a sort of compensation for subjection by the trick of turning the bowed head and twisted body into a lyrical accent. Jazz as the American accent therefore bespeaks the adoption as the voice of a people of an unconscious, deeply servile reflex. Another instance: the vogue of the vulgarisation of culture. This practice is not as innocent as it looks. Works of vulgarisation are common in many countries. France,

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for instance, for a century has had its Will Durants and its Lewis Brownes. They cater to a low degree of the middle class which for snob reasons desires to "know about" culture. But such writers are ignored by the groups who properly represent the head and nervous system of the people. The distinguishing point with our vulgarisers is precisely that our leaders are committed to them; our "heads" are willing to be levelled down, and further the levelling process. What really happens in this popularisation of art, letters, science, history? It professes of course to enhance consciousness; it *is* the exact reverse of what it professes. To write glibly about Plato, and leave out the essence of Plato—to describe his life in pleasant journalese and to excise what made him great—is not to increase consciousness of Plato: it is to agglutinate Plato in the unconscious self-indulgence of the popular reader. It is, virtually, to destroy the Plato who has made men think, by substituting for the man above us the name which all can possess. In our fad of popular books on learned subjects lurks a deliberate, although disguised assault by the folk on the very forces that have made man conscious. This, of course, has always been a folk desire. To make Socrates drink poison while he lives, and to be smart about him in a book, once he is dead, are both attacks on the Man and on the consciousness he nurtured. The acquiescence of our intellectuals is the new element.

(6) All the practices and cults of Power which we

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have discussed, whereby the reigning group in America aspires to stamp out or to neutralise the others.

5

The key in all these tendencies and agitations is the desire to be uniform. The key to the desire to be uniform is the privilege it offers to *remain unconscious*. For consciousness, as Dewey has suggested, is a fruit of the intensity of multiple life solving its conflicts not by suppression but by integration. Our chaos is a variety, wondrously rich, of needs, potentials, natures, values. The chaos must be resolved into some sort of order. To resolve it without loss of the variety that makes it would mean to *symphonise* it: this would mean to control the elements of our variety: and this would mean to understand and to be conscious of the worlds whirling within our chaos. But uniformity requires merely that a dominant strain within the chaos assert itself through Power, and extirpate all that is not compliant. The result of such uniformity is that consciousness beyond the simple self can be dispensed with—the way of a childish people.

Well: why not? Surely, in the formation of all peoples, there have been suppressions, excisions. It may be hard for the elements that perish; but should this prevail against such possible splendour as has come from compact peoples in the past? Precisely

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through comparison with them, we may perceive the menace before us. *In the past, the folk has been kept varied within itself by every force of production, economy and custom.* (Even to-day, in so compact a people as the French, each province and each town enacts a vividly individual life.) Order was always directed by some group, distinguished from the folk and at last identified as its leader, by the possession of values, by the will to unity and by consciousness of the life that it proposed to govern. To this group, the folk fed whatever energy within it was consonant with this principle of directing order. This group was an aristocracy of some sort: it might exploit (it usually did), but it could not exterminate the folk—its body: it had, therefore, to understand it. *Consciousness beyond self became the principle of aristocracy, and when it failed the aristocracy failed also.* There was no levelling from downward to common uniformity: there was, on the contrary, a hierarchising from upward to the conscious unifying symbol of king or priest. The folk, then, literally, was plasm; and the head that formed it worked as the phyletic principle of differentiation which forms, by distinguishing, the organs of a body. The archetype of the historic process is the Mosaic story. Here is a folk “chosen by Jehovah.” This term take to mean that Jehovah was chosen by the folk: specifically that the folk possessed the potential will to order and to consciousness. Now appears Moses in whom this prin-

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ciple is no longer potential—is incarnate; and with him appear the conditions for its working. Moses with his priests and his heads of tribes and his heads of hundreds integrates the folk into a people. Analogously, the Brahmins worked in India, the aristocrats in the Greek cities, the temporal and priestly princes, together with the monks, in Mediæval Europe, the king and his court and his mastered nobles in France and Spain. The natural yet intolerable heterogeneity of folks in each case was made integral by heads in whom were consciousness, value, the will of the folk to become organic.

Let me be forgiven this impossible attempt to describe in a page the genesis of cultures, since my purpose is but to set a background for the precise American event. Our folk is not being made integral by a directing group¹; it is being made uniform by economics. No king, no group made sacred by its values knits our folk together with one language, one banner and one prayer against the force of economic discord; but Production—newsprint, radio, communication—clamps uniformity upon it. The value, in lieu of an ideal of which king or god is symbol, becomes the achievement of an inner sameness like the outer sameness of machine-politics, machine-art, machine-

¹Of course, no group that governed could have done so without the economic power. When economics tended to keep communities apart, aristocracies of wealth were needed to bind them in body as well as in spirit. Now that economics binds, aristocracies of wealth are not needed and have been discarded. Our men of wealth emphatically do not form an aristocracy. The democratisation of wealth must mean the elimination of wealth from leadership; the spiritualisation of aristocracy.

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sport, machine-customs. Our folk in itself has no *conscious* standards beyond the momentum of its present ways. This momentum it calls Progress. (If there are fifteen million cars, thirty million cars will be progress; if there are sixty-story buildings, eighty stories will be progress. If there are three-ring circuses, five rings will be progress.) The heads of past folks worked, as we know, cruelly and stupidly enough. History has no Golden Day we should recapture. But its heritage, which is all we have of God and Man, was the work of such heads drawing and distilling and forming the energy of the folk-bodies. The folk, in its leaders, rationalised its aspirations. Our folk rationalises its inertia. Its leaders are rationalisations of its appetite; its values and its methods of becoming uniform are rationalisations of its sheer momentum. The balance of this colossal levelling from downward threatens to be the gradual transforming of the magnificent dreams of our world into business and bigness. The fate of the dinosaur and the great lizards should concern us.

To this issue of a uniform people, an unconscious people, a people enslaved to the monotone of industrial "advance" which is the dominion of *things*, there is an answer: a conscious people, a varied and integral people, the symphonic nation in whom all selves and all visions adumbrate to Wholeness. For this alternative cause, my book is written. But be-

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fore we can grapple with a method whereby such a nation might be composed from the American jungle, we must consider: (a) whether a tradition leading to such an issue exists in the American folk—a tradition which will give it energy and imagination wherewith to work towards this issue, and (b) what conditions in our present life make such an issue possible and desirable to the folk itself. If the natural talent is here and the particular motive to gain the particular end is cryingly alive, a method for gaining it may be heeded.

XVI: MYSTIC AMERICA

1

IN Chapter II, I said that man's sense of the whole is germinally his sense of self; that this sense, immediately experienced, spreads in some men to become the mystic sense—the sense of the cosmic Whole, and that this ultimate One is “known” *in the exact same way* in which a man “knows” the unity of his person. Man's need of order, I said, and his making of order are his science, his art, his religion; and these are all to be referred to the initial sense of order called the self. (The prototype of scientific number is the human body, the standard of æsthetic form is the human body, and conscious man is the mirrored and mirroring image of the God, as Moses knew and Hermes Trismegistus when he said: As above, so below.) Man's growth, then, intellectual, æsthetic, spiritual, is an ascending series from the nuclear unity of self to the unity of life. . . . But this simplification was not accurate. Man's sense of self is not reproduced or adumbrated into the mystic sense: more strictly, it is *realised* there. Selfhood is falsehood, unless it is experienced as a relative focus in the unity of all men and all being.¹ The usual “self” is a flashing and

¹For a profound application of this ancient mystic truth to modern social and personal life (by a man moreover who rejects the mystic) see Dr. Trigant Burrow's book “The Social Basis of Consciousness.”

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fusing of moods, a flux of memories and behaviours split from the unity of life. Its "separateness" is its deletion of the whole that makes it. Such "self" is the root of all disease; multiply it and it is the modern chaos. The experience of true wholeness is a light that can be centred sharp or wide; illuming by its focus what is called self, what is called the nation, what is called the cosmos. This true awareness I name mystic; because it is not analytic, because no accumulation of the sense or of the logic of sense can ever sum to it. The conviction of personal self, although not logically proved, determines all our acts; and likewise the mystic sense, when it is given.

The conflict between reason and science on the one hand and mysticism on the other is nothing but the tension between the parts and the whole. Although science observes the many, its meaning is to establish the one: its faith hence is in a law not empirically provable, and without this law science cannot even observe! To observe it must have number; and number's "self," the transmutable "one"—since it is pre-rational, pre-analytic, unprovable and yet the premise of all logic, like the personal self—is a mystic structure. You may call your order scientific, if you like: the fact remains that from enumeration which assumes a "*one*" *before* observance, you are building a "*One*" *beyond* observance. Not alone your goal in science (as in art and religion) but your outset also, is the One which is mystic. Art and religion,

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as well as science, are disciplines under logic: but science, as well as art and religion, move from the mystic premise of a Whole upon that Whole's unproved yet unavoidable fulfilment.

The true mystic is a naturalistic monist, in whom man's instinctive impulse to assume a whole, and intellectual effort to create one, have joined and become *integrally conscious*. He is the rejector of all dualisms, all transcendentalisms. But there are always degenerates from this true mysticism (that of the Upanishads and Moses, of Pythagoras and Spinoza, of Goethe, Blake, Cézanne, Whitman): they are men who have tasted the experience of wholeness, been unable to sustain it in their lives, and lapsed to the compromise of setting their frail *sentiment* of wholeness upon some phase of life or other worldly dream. From Buddhist, Platonist, Manichee, to Mrs. Eddy, such "mysticals" are ever rampant. In their name the true mystic is denounced.

2

Now, for the immediate application: To be unconscious of the Whole is to live in terms of the part *as if it were the whole*; and this—the way of animals and of practical men—is to be unconscious. To be conscious of the Whole is to live in terms of the Whole *expressed through its parts*; and this—the way of the mystic and of Man—is to be conscious. America, from its historic outset, has had the *mystic tra-*

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dition: a tradition, that is, which rose from consciousness of the whole of man and of God; which linked the land with all lands and all men; which identified the self of our land with the destiny of human kind.

By contrast, consider other worlds. England and France ever regarded themselves as individuals in competition with other individuals whom they strove to outclass. Rome was mistress of a miscellaneous world, which is not the same as being the soul of the world. The Greeks looked *out* upon barbarians and strangers; they never digested the wholeness of their prophets. These were nations in an unconscious, dualistic course: their way, since it was that of men who in all ages have called themselves—however falsely—“practical men” I call the *practical tradition*. Only the Jews of the ancient western peoples seem to have realised their sense of self as a focus of the Whole. (It was their real sense of wholeness that made their self real, and made it survive over many a “practical” nation.) The process in them was not immediate or constant: ages of indoctrination by prophet and rabbi, and of elimination by disaster, were needed to purify the Jew from the normal unconscious course of the child race and to cause him to accept the destiny, linking him with all men, which is the norm of Man. Mystics have lived in every nation; the wonder of the Jew was that he realised his mystics. The Christian Republic of mediæval Europe incorporated this mystic tradition of the Whole,

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and strove to fulfil it with the order and arms of Rome. Ere it was more than a completed project, the Synthesis failed. But at its agony, came America; America whose spirit was the mystic destiny—and whose flesh was the dissolute flesh, of the defeated European Mother. From Israel to holy Rome, from holy Rome to the theocracies of Massachusetts the lineage is not broken. . . .

Even before the Puritans, the mystic tradition was planted on our shore. The man who first discovered the Atlantic moved, if confusedly, within it. He thought that he was sailing for the Indies; he dreamed to absorb the scattered East into the Organ of the West. He spoke to Isabel, mystic queen of Spain, and to her monks, of making One the two halves of the world. It was Columbus, first historic man to touch America, who grounded our mystic tradition. The conquistadores, whose will was more intent on the paving of steel than on the end of wholeness, yet furthered the tradition: they brought the mediæval priests in whom it was still vital. The Jesuits of France followed the Spaniards. But it was the Puritans who made the tradition organic, by establishing it as the Law in their bleak towns. Prophets like John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, Ann Hutchinson, John Eliot, Roger Williams staked in the wildernesses of New England little worlds where humankind might be one. Each in his faltering way worked towards unity of rule and service, of deed and

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prayer: visioned an America free of the divisions of Europe—an American dawn to bring the Day.

3

Within a hundred years, the purpose of such men had broken. We know how they builded with materials already rotting, with measures that crumbled in their hands. Their very definitions were part of the vast Deliquescence which had sent them forth. Inevitable was the growing shrillness of their voices, the widening gap between their world and their project. And inevitable was the rise of men of the other stamp—the “practical men” who rejected the Whole since it had failed. From that failure in England, the many parts survived and set themselves up. State, law, caste, property, reason, etc., became the several gods of these men, their one reality. The mystic tradition was in full retreat on the Atlantic seaboard long before the Revolution. The shrewd conclave, which under patronage of Washington and Franklin, locked the door on their deliberations and wrote down the new State (forgetting even the bill of rights), marked the climax of American disdain for the oldest American tradition. But we cannot blame these men. The words in which the great tradition still occasionally spoke had become wild, its laws were rusted iron. Fanatics like Jonathan Edwards had mangled the spirit to fit decadent codes. To have seen the eternal truth imprisoned in the

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frenzy of absolutistic and reactionary churchmen would have required a prophet. And these were but "practical men": men who saw facts, or projects of facts—parts, parts always. They were looking forward. The Thing (another word for the part) was, as Emerson said later, in the saddle; and they were the slaves of the Thing. By this dominion of *parts* (commerce, industry, farming, money, and the like) the old order feebly transplanted from England had to be wholly corrupted into chaos, ere there could be the birth of a new order. The fathers of the Republic were perfecters of this necessary chaos—the preparers of the American Jungle from which may rise America at last. Such has ever been the rôle of the "practical men." They solve the question of life by begging it. They exalt some fragment—person, caste, church, state, property, reason—and declare its autonomy over all. Their course is the strewn breakage of spirit, which is wholeness. No matter. Since they coin money and bury their dead, they are called "practical men." Since they fulfil the process of decomposition whereby life is renewed, they *are* practical men. They rose now, on the failure of the mystic tradition in an America still unborn of breaking Europe. The Zion of the Puritan became the little India of the Brahmin yankee; Penn's city of brotherly love bred a snob town that imitated London; the good Indian of John Eliot turned to a "dead Indian." . . .

But the great tradition did not die; it went under-

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ground. There, for the first fifty years of the American Republic, it led a cavernous life. Lacking sun, it grew dwarfed, took shapes that were false. Perhaps it struck blindly in Shays' Rebellion (our schools have hidden this event); perhaps it muttered in the Tammany Hall of Aaron Burr (what nation knows so little of its beginnings?). It was there, sentimental, confused, in the agrarian utopias of Rousseauist and physiocrat, of Rappite, Fourierist, Shaker. It had a nose above ground (no other part of the head) in the movement of Jackson. With Abolition, it was hysterical and hot; with Unitarianism, it was hysterical and cold. In the verse of Whittier, whose "Snow-bound" is a neglected scripture, it stumbled towards sanity again, girded itself, opened its dimmed eye. But the America of Power was against it, even the America of genius. Calhoun with Grecian themes of slave-democracy wove spells to keep it under; Clay stammered eloquently to confuse it, and Webster roared its own slogans to destroy it. Not till these masters of the practical tradition had prepared the civil war (to which the way of all "practical men"—since their wisdom is division—ineluctably leads a land), did the mystic tradition lift up its voice once more.

4

It spoke in Abraham Lincoln. This man, who believed that he was following the practical tradition,

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whose words had been of law and of the Constitutional fathers, moved at last within a vision which no statute gave him. Intellectually, he did not understand the mystic tradition. Yet he was its voice and its servant. It spoke in four writers: Emerson, Poe, Thoreau, Whitman.¹ Each in his way harked back to the American beginnings. Emerson made a constitution of the Whole, in which man was citizen and carried his statutes in his mind. Thoreau acted the programme: he went out on the rivers and let his spirit flow with the land. He understood the red man—his religious restraint, and our connection, deeper than culture, with him. With his hands, Thoreau made service to the tradition of his fathers. Whitman did not think out a plan like his master Emerson: Whitman *saw*. "Walden" is a deed, a kind of Creation. "Leaves of Grass" is a vision, a kind of Song of Moses. The eyes of the beloved vagabond were dim, being too widely focussed. The details are not there of the body of his vision. But again, in him, the intent of America's past looms forward to a future. Like a mist of spring it is, cloudy, seed-laden—solid enough to draw the eyes of the world.²

¹There was a various fringe of thwarted mystics—of men who tried to live and work in this tradition or who unconsciously were moved by it, and who failed. For instance, among the writers: Hawthorne and Melville, possibly Lanier. And, of course, the religious sects: Shakers, Mormons, Perfectionists, Adventists, etc.

²The reader will of course not be confused by the seeming contradiction between what is said here of Emerson, Thoreau, etc., and what was said in "The Grave of Europe." Formally, intellectually, these

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Contemporary, yet isolate and misunderstood (is it a wonder, since he did not understand himself? No man who knows himself will lack understanding in his fellows), Poe weaves with his formal logic the scheme planned by Emerson, the wholeness visioned by Whitman. This arch-romantic, this concocter of mystery-tales and pseudo-gothic gardens, is the most truly traditional, the most truly practical American of them all: the deepest plotter of an America that shall be no mere echo of old rhapsodes, but a New World indeed! For a new world requires a new substance, and Poe is an alchemist—a seeker of stuff-transfiguration. In “Eureka” he scenarios the Whole that his spiritual fathers have with broken words been hailing. He cannot touch it with sensuous fingers; he is not artist enough, like Whitman. Nor, like Emerson, is he preacher enough to exhort it. He is a man of scientific intuition; he sees how the machine may transmute human behaviour—the machine a new hand. He subscribes through such means a chemic transubstantiation in which personal destiny will be revalued. All this he does *for* America in the same larval way that he is *of* America. He works as a prisoner in a cave, with only mud at hand, might

writers were indeed derivatives of Europe, and had their counterpart in the Romantics of England, Germany, Switzerland and France: precisely as our machine civilisation is an ultimate derivative of Europe's culture. But deeper down in these men was the neo-primitive American soul, essentially theirs and yet the sperm-seed of a tradition older than Europe: precisely as, within our civilisation, is the American Jungle. The point is, simply, that we have come to a more essential level in our inquiry.

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model a temple for a sun god.¹ All these men, indeed, are thwarted; their tradition stifles since it is submerged; not one of them has a clear way into America's past from which to issue, clear, into America's future. The sun and the fields are with the makers of discord. The false splendour of the first years of the Republic stands between the tradition and itself. Whitman grows weary with exhortation; Emerson refines and refines till he has convinced himself that his cave is the very place from which to vault to Plato's heaven; Thoreau cramps his skill into a huckleberry party, spills his magnificent ire on a county taxman; Melville's despair turns mad and mute. All together, they scarcely make the Genesis for our American scripture. There is longing in them, rather than the conquest of the wilderness before our Canaan. And yet they prove, at that heyday of dissent, the life of the oldest American tradition.

5

We have begun to read these men, while we ignore the lords of their day—the priests of the practical tradition: Paine,² Irving, Cooper, Willis, Simms,

¹The reader will understand that I totally reject the current attitude towards Poe. I consider him a mediocre poet, a writer of poor prose, an artist wholly unachieved. But I see in him a potentially great intellect, a great spirit, an American prophet. I have outlined my judgment in "Poe at Last," an article which appeared, December 30, 1925, in *The New Republic*.

²Paine wrote: "We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation similar to the present has not happened since the days of Noah. The birthday of a new world is at hand." Let his fine

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Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes. But this is not because the mystic tradition flourishes at last in our land. It means the contrary. Our own age is so crowded with hierophants of the practical tradition—materialists, “realists,” decorators, apologists of every kind of fragmentary view and every cult of blindness—that there is no need for those of a like mind to hark back to yellowed pages. Each age supplies its own “practical” prophets. But the man of our day who feels America’s destiny of birth—the seed within us of a nation whose selfhood shall be whole—will husband the few witnesses he finds. He will treasure Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, Poe.

This is not enough to keep them alive. A tradition lives only when each succeeding generation recreates it. Each age of the hale Catholic church, or of Judaism, athletically reinterpreted its Scripture: each age of England re-establishes its Constitution. Such works as “Walden,” “Leaves of Grass,” “Eureka,” “Moby Dick” are the text of an American tradition. What are we doing to bring it into the substance of our lives? The practical tradition has its technic: we have studied it, in studying our Jungle and its cults of Power. Its passionate commentators fill our daily sheets; crowd the air and the movies; subtly bend the young to their way by dating the

frenzy not deceive us. The shabbiest disciples of eighteenth century rationalism were the quickest to borrow the vatic language of the Christian tradition. Paine had no creative values, a shallow sense of life, and small imagination.

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American birth from Washington and Franklin, rather than from Columbus and Roger Williams, or—more properly still—from the native cultures of Maya and Pueblo. Of course, the practical tradition is not practical at all; for its gods are the creatures of disunion, and disunion is disease.

We have these two traditions, and we must choose between them. We must choose at once; for while we stand at the turning, life forces the issue.

XVII: CAPTURABLE AMERICA

1

THE destiny of the American folk is not a choice between two ways, either of which might lead to a certain health: it is not the alternative of creating a new world (in the mystic tradition) or of carrying on a prosperous, precedented life. If this were the case, there is every reason to believe that we should follow the practical tradition; that we should wax fat, like other peoples, and eventually, like them, go down before some fatter foe. The issue is more tragic—and more interesting. Man in modern America is in a state of danger. We have no *living* choice.

The menace of our life is not due to its explicit traits. To have a good time, to adore comfort, to spend and spin, are not exalted aims; but there is naught lethal about them. At first blush, there seems no reason why a folk well-doctored and sleek-housed should not rush around in motors, swill radio, worship one-day idols, gobble advertisements, elect knaves to office, and paint pretty pictures on the face of business—forever. Merely to be an animal and live in the jungle is not necessarily a menace. It is quite possible that creatures prosper longer, without roads, concepts, history, consciousness at all. But even as such animals live in an animal background,

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such peoples should have a base of inheritance and nature like their idea-less foreground. A modern man in an Amazonian jungle, an ant from that jungle in a city street would not get on for the same reason: the maladjustment between their world and their self.

We have seen in our study of the American Jungle (a *fact* which we discovered to be an *ideal* state), in our study of the machine which is the aggressive and embodied concept of our anarchic will, in our study of Power—its pretenses, its impotence, its gods—how profound is the abyss between the American world and the American spirit. Our Nature, being hostile and aggressive and conceptual, demands that we have concepts to control it; our Jungle, being a rotting ferment of deformed ideals within us, demands of us values to reform it. Bereft of vision and control, we live in a world that calls for vision and control beyond all others.¹ Without them, we suffer. We lack comfort, we lack strength, we lack the very things we sell our lives to gain. Statistics shout their message of insanity, neurosis, torpor, disillusion, tiding upon this land of gold in which everything is for sale and nothing delivered. . . . All this we have

¹Let us not forget that Western Europe is also in cultural chaos; we have seen that our chaos is that of Europe grown isolate and rendered more acute (and more pregnant) by new elements. But in Europe, the traditions of the broken Whole of Christendom are more intact; the mechanisation of life, which we know to be largely the result of that Whole's dissolution, is less advanced. There is less "civilisation" in Europe, precisely because less of the energy of the Mediterranean culture has been denatured to make it. There is hence less discrepancy between the inner control of culture-values and the outer fact; between the spirit and will of men, and the world they live in.

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seen to be our present: but all this is the merest surface of our danger. The threat of our practical tradition is not in what we are or do to-day: it is in what to-day will make of us to-morrow.

2

It would not be hard to make my point abstractly. Our practical tradition (and that of modern Europe) is itself a rationale of the break of the Christian Whole. It is a defeatist principle. It is based on the reality of the parts of life (sense, power, reason, property, etc.) and on the denial of the Whole; yet these parts which it exalts have value-energy which only the tradition of the Whole could give them. (*Worship* of science, *loyalty* to State, *faith* in reason, *devotion* to property, *love* of Power are examples of the hopeless muddle of the practical mind in which débris of the Mediterranean Culture are thrown contradictorily and blindly together, like parts of a house visited by a cyclone.) Child of a chaos that came from the death of that Culture, the practical tradition can but perpetuate chaos. Being itself a principle of compensation for a disintegrated world, it can have no control, no creative virtue. . . . But the plain truth is more vivid in its flesh and blood. . . .

Imagine a child living on bad food, on food that does not nurture his organic growth. He is hungry, there is no other food; he goes on eating. Some day,

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this child may learn that his diet is bad. The problem is: will he learn this before the bad food has permanently hurt him, and—more acutely—will he know how to replace the bad with good?

We know that the common practice of our lives—our “diet”—is unsound. There is more critical self-examination in America than in France and England. The great vogue of Menckanism proves how wide-spread—if not deep—is our sense of something wrong. But while we each year more elaborately know that our food is bad, we go on eating it. And we must, since there is no other food! And there is no other food, because the makers of food—the leaders—are not here to meet the criticism of what we have, with something better.

While the minority which thinks, goes on exposing the “inanity” of our politics, the “sterility” of our churches, the “insipidity” of our arts and pleasures, the “mechanics” of our education, the ugliness of our journals, etc., etc., etc., all of us, including the minority and its children, go on partaking of these politics, arts, pleasures, since there is nothing else. The young man rises from the desk at which he has penned a jeremiad against movie or motor or synthetic gin as examples of our shoddy life, and is forced to movie and gin and speed when he needs recreation. Although he has very superior ideas about our paltry novelists and politicians, some life-instinct urges him to note them, as an alternative less deadly than the

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death of shutting himself off from his surroundings. And if this is true of the man, what of the child whose need of the immediate world is more imperative than ours? The intellectual whose habit-forming youth goes back to radio-less drawing-rooms and jogging buggies is somewhat insulated into self-sufficiency. But his son must create his world from the world about him; it is inevitable (and right) that his personality partake of the stuffs and tempo of our jungle. To "protect" him would be to sterilise him altogether. Moreover, the criticism which the child receives through the mind will be as naught compared with the organic nurture of his experience. You may fill your library table with liberal words; what effect can they have on an organism which is literally the product of what those words attack? The parents who think that their "oasis" schools and their personal influence can change the very air of us all are pathetically fooled. Every child needs fellowship, needs for a while to run with the pack, needs to fight up to the level of his personal values through an acceptance of current values. Every child needs, above all, the pleasures of his fellows. To-day, this means the continuum of adulterated wares—comfort-devices hawked by the slaves of Power. And whatever these mean, if they persist, will shape the American of to-morrow.¹

¹Mere adverse criticism, particularly if it is bright, may become but an irony added to this danger. The intelligence formed in the rhythm of the movie, radio, motor, journal; fed by the mush and poison of

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There are plenty of signs already of mental and spiritual *malnutrition*. I refer to naught so dubious as intelligence tests and insanity statistics. My own experience is, that Americans of the so-called young intellectual classes are the least vitally *concerned*, the least spiritually quickened of any I have encountered. Literature is less to them than a sport (which has its rules of excellence): it is a liquor in which the ingredients, as with bootleg whiskey, are of no importance. Everything, good and bad, is poured into the punch-bowl: the point is, to refill it often and quickly. A dulness of mind, which is of course the want of an illumined direction, is concealed beneath an electric patina taken from the machine. The corruption is worst, of course, in the most sensitive who are most speedily attainted by a baseless diet.¹ The capacity of the American élite to tolerate general ideas, to sustain thought or emotion, to love or to hate, to feel at all without premature ejaculation (this is called action), to meditate, to search, to support solitude, to realise life imaginatively or even to recognise true imagination, is very low. It is bound to become

purveyors whose aim is the nerve-drugging, mind-drugging stuffs that will make the public cry for more, learns to take the "kick" from criticism and to rush on for the next sensation. This is the secret of the success of Mencken. The reaction, after hearing about the food that undermines us—the *food we must eat*—is the torpor and dismay that unman not so much the "Babbitts" as the youth who have revolted.

¹The pathetic case of Heywood Broun is typical: the beautiful stuff in this man has been standardised and galvanised into a *grimace* to cover American dulness. I can guess what Mr. Broun feels, when his grimace breaks: this must be what America will feel when some day it stops speeding. Agony! That is why hordes of the sensitive-defeated are so attached to the protective grimace of Heywood Broun.

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lower, if the spawning facts of our Nature, which only such capacities in high degree can control, continue to control us.

3

The debit column is long, and we have dwelt with it enough. Our dangers grow solid with organised momentum. There is this technic of death in the modern world—this “practical tradition”; and no technic of life. That is why the mercantile Mussolinis and the long-range guns control us. But our virtues rise also, for they are of one substance with our evils. In America, all phases heighten. We are not a stable body whose increase in one sense must compound with decrease in another. We grow; as in a child, our talents are nurtured at the same pace with habits that may destroy the talents. . . .

Upon the side of our hope, there is first and last the peculiar energy of the American world—the forming life of our land which makes us all, nordic and Negro, American; and which relates us more essentially with the Indian or the Peruvian, than with our blood-brothers of Europe. This energy tends towards a passional restraint; it is plastic, cruel, darkly exalted. It made the culture of Maya and Pueblo; it is already inscrutably at work within us and without: transfiguring our unconscious spirit, plotting the straight structure of our streets. It is so wondrously atune with our mystic tradition that one is almost

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ready to believe in an Atlantis, whence Egyptian, Mediterranean, and Amerindian all emerged.

There is the gaining instinct that we are not well: that Power makes impotent; that we lack even comfort; that a nation which turns money into a symbol must always lack even enough money. (For a symbol is inexhaustible. A bad symbol spreads like a cancer and a good symbol spreads like a grace. We are coming to know that money is not a fact with us at all; it is our symbol of excellence. As such it is a disease—a subject for spiritual hygiene.) We are learning that our love, which has no place in a domain of Power, is thwarted and twists back upon itself in fear: that love, so tortured, works in our lynchings—of Negroes, and of gentle Italian dreamers. And there is in us all the dark conscience of our murder of the primeval forests—of something in their depth which is a depth in us; of our refusal of their value, of our disdain of the red man who was the spirit of those forests and who is yet, beneath the layers of law and memory, the spirit of ourselves. For our root is the red man; our true building must rise from recognition of his base in our heart: and our denial of this is a disease within us.

There is the waning of our interest in meretricious cures and systems. Everywhere in America, concern with politics, law, economics retreats before the appetite—if not yet the understanding—for psychology, literature, art. What can this mean but the folk's

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gradual acceptance that our organised forms of life have failed, and that the sources which art reveals and psychology considers must be lifted like ore from the mine, for a new forging? From this standpoint, the anæmia of our politics is a good omen. The outsider, like Harold Laski, who is rendered pessimistic by the American swarming of low men in high places, goes on the assumption that government is still the *mind* of our nation. Of course, if this were true, the people that elects a Coolidge is an idiot. (There is in our country a school of critics who assume this: and their ignorance lacks the excuse of the outsider.) America is not an idiot, but a neurotic. The neurotic is often a sensitive and powerful youth, too creative to channel his gifts into conventional adjustments, yet thwarted from creating channels of his own. A neurotic may act like an idiot, because his mind is not in his acts. A folk withdrawing confidence from political forms that have grown obsolete, yet not mature enough to make political forms of its own, would express this neurosis of *normal adolescence* much as we do. Its "mind" would cease to vote and leave the ridiculous sham of politics to ridiculous men. . . . Lincoln, who lived when the old America (of the Constitution) received its death-blow, was the last American in whom a vital interest in our life could be fulfilled by direct political action. Since then the mind of new America cuts more and more beneath the forms to the substance whence an ethos and a new

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politics must be derived. Therefore, I place the atrophy of our concern in constitutional government among the good signs in our life.

There is the use which we make of the machine in order to realise for our nation an imaginative, plastic, communicable form. It is good for a people to possess a land in which it can behold the focus and the symbol of its creative impulse. England had its insularity, Spain its place of liaison between Africa and Europe, France its Ile de France, Rome its city, Greece its fusion of invasive sea and exclusive mountain, Egypt its Nile, Palestine its quasi-universal vista, everywhere from Carmel to the Jordan, of ocean, hill and plain. Similarly, America, with true intuition, has longed to be continental, to be physically the whole between two oceans and two worlds. But without the machine, this concept could never become experience; without the machine, indeed, it would have ceased to be even a political concept. By 1845, the pioneer had thrown out thin lines to Gulf and Pacific. In 1865, the sparse-settled empire was held, against the pull of its sections, by the machine. Not Lincoln's armies, so much as the telegraph, the railroad, the new will of industrial expansion saved our continental nation. The machine replaced for us the communicable bond, in earlier vast lands, of church or monarch. Even in the year 2000, the United States will be a thinly settled land. The machine will have made it as close-knit as a town. . . .

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So far, it is true, the machine has served chiefly to bind ignorance in Maine with dulness in California. But also, it has made the entire country plastically real—an accessible physical experience for the people. We have been imaginatively prepared to behave as Americans, against the possible day when the term American will have been endowed with a creative value.

Finally, for our hope, there is the truth that we are a capturable people. It is in our blood to be captured; to be captured "high." Among the colonials were men who had been won by the "new ideas" of Europe: Puritan, Calvinist, Quaker, etc., were capturable men beyond their conservative brothers. The lower misfits who came with them were capturable also: there were numbers of criminals, ne'er-do-wells, neurotics; and it is a fact that in an age of transition the maladjusted are closer to the norm of growth than the "normal." Often have the Americans been captured; and never remained captive! In four hundred years our life has never set: there is no country in the world where the complete conservative is so unvital; where the Academy is so feeble; where conventional law is so impotent, where constitutional forms are so void. Americans are not, like Canadians and Australians, *settlers*. Aristocracies captured the colonials, captured the Revolution (turning out the true settlers who were tories); libertarians and romantics captured the young Republic; countless sects and panaceas have for a day won fragments of this cap-

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turable people, who never remain settled. We are still volatile: still, hence, dissatisfied: still capturable. What will happen if there come a group or groups of men to capture this longing folk . . . a group who have, really, what they claim to have, and what the folk need?

4

Ere we can make our final approach to this promise, we must return to a final level of our danger. Granted that the alternative before us is rebirth through active leadership in our mystic tradition, or is death; granted that we are a folk capturable "high" as well as "low"; granted that we are aware of our disease, it does not have to follow that we shall choose the way of life. Granted all this, and yet the odds are against us. For the "universal will to live" is a romantic falsehood; and the "eternal instincts of self-protection and self-survival" are myths. Why do we not know this, since we know that most seeds never rise from the soil that rots them, that myriad sperm-cells never reach the ovum, that men deliberately and joyously court death? Failure and extinction are also part of life; and since the "self" may be a delusive fragment of events, "self-protection and self-survival" may be delusions also. We are aware of individuals whose deeds certify their annihilation, whose "will to live" is a shadow of their organic will to die: why then can we not conceive of a people bent on its own ruin? To say that *just because* we are the

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Grave of Europe we shall rise; that *just because* we are ill we shall get well, is unmitigated nonsense. A man is stricken with disease. He says, I want to be well. But his blood and his organs work towards dissolution. He'll be buried, despite his lying will to live; *for the real will in him is death*. America says: I want to be whole. But what if the blood and organs of our world "say" otherwise?

We have seen that America is unconscious, that it has the will and the technic to racialise its unconsciousness. We have seen that the end of unconsciousness in a jungle of blindly inherited concepts and of conceptual creatures (the machine) is death. As in the sick man, therefore, the will to death in our land is potent; *and is protected by a euphoria of health*. We call ourselves conscious, progressive, prosperous, peaceful, and under cover of this delirium we sleep and rot. We say Power, we sow impotence; we say Comfort, we sow disease; we say Peace, we sow the whirlwind.¹ If we really mean what we say, we must effect a method and technic for action; even as a stricken body that really means "I will live" finds a technic against the method of its sickness.

¹I refer specifically to the tradition of violence which is being fostered in America. A folk taught that minority thought should be violently suppressed, that minority emotions should be violently blocked, that any disturbing elements of poesy or vision should be violently bludgeoned into order, is being prepared, in the inevitable day when prosperity droops or trouble rises, for violence against itself. A folk that learns no control *except the economic* will lose all control when the economic security for some reason fails. That is why I say that we are literally sowing a whirlwind of blood.

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A tradition of wholeness with no technic to enact it, a will to health with no method to work it, becomes at last a falsehood and a stench. We stand to learn that the day of words is over, the problem of practice before us. . . .

XVIII: THE SYMPHONIC NATION

1

THIS problem of a creative American life, involving person, group, leader, nation, is one problem: no phase of it can be conceived without the others. The creative person is the leader, when there are persons capable of being led; creative persons alone can create the creative group; and such groups only can create the nation. Conversely, the potential ethos of the nation inspires the group, empowers the leader, makes real the person. This organic union between individual, group and people . . . between actuality and promise, means and end . . . is the pattern which most of modern thought has been devoted to expounding. The technic of analysis, alone, divides our problem, gives to its parts a false perspective as if they followed one another in time-sequence, whereas, of course, if there be growth at all, all parts will build at once.

Yet we must enter somewhere. I choose the group, because a group is medial and intermediate to both person and people. In order to clear the ground for imagining a possible group, such as would enact the creative work which we envisage, let us glance at a few actual ones. Consider first the typical minority group: a group of organised Irish, or of middle-class Jews, or of class-conscious workmen. They insist on

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and fight for their rights, they bewail injustice. They select to lead them the shrewd fellows who can chip privileges and wring salutes from their betters. Even in their lighter moments—of entertainment and of art—they indulge themselves and they enhance themselves. They act as absolutistic, power-covetous bodies. They strive to make themselves as independent and as autonomous as they can. Although they insist that their demand for rights means that they should be treated like their brothers, actually they imagine themselves as separate (and as a good deal better). America they regard as a grab-bag; with other groups they are in competition. Injustice means to them that they lack the chance—not to be themselves, but to scramble as high as the rest. They are unconscious of American life, save as the pinch of circumstance awakes them, or the hardness of doors which they desire to open. They are so busy looking at the earthly treasure outside or convincing the world and themselves of their own virtue, that they have neither energy nor time to know themselves.

Master groups—chambers of commerce, churches, professional men, organised Anglo-Saxons—are like them. They whine less, since they can threaten more; they ask for less, since they have more to defend. They are less eager for the truth, since truth to them means a change, and a change their diminution. One and all, such groups are little herds of little selves—clamorous, absolute. And their sum is the American

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mass which tramples down what does not soothe its gait of self-indulgence. They are all passive; they do nothing; the more aggressive they are, the most passive.¹ When the daughters of the Revolution strive to stunt America from evolution, they are not less passive to the lurch of the herd, because they happen to "head" it. When the well-groomed Rabbi shouts that his flock are as good, conforming citizens as any sons of Harvard, he is not less passive to mob ideals because he obstreperously begs for the admittance which those mob ideals deny him. When the labourer strains to snatch as much as he can of the proceeds of the Capitalistic order he is not less passive to that order because he strikes and sabotages. The fallacy of the absolutistic ego, of the atomic will and of Power, rots our groups. Delusively conscious of "self" they move blindly for self-acquisition; they sum to the impotent swarm of the American herd. Even enlightened groups—groups which come together to defend the rights of others, to serve the people, to propound some liberal cause—merely subtilise this fallacy. They preach their principle and do not live it; or they try to live it as if their "part" must influence the whole from the outside. Their assumption of apartness, however benevolent and unconscious, breaks the organic union with the Whole, which their aims profess.²

¹See Chapter VII.

²I am moved to except from these generalisations certain rural communities of Negroes which I have known in the South. Of course, these

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2

Before our possible group—creative of America because it is organic with and microcosmic of America—can come to be, its members must have redefined their basic attitudes. Any creative act—and any life—is the attempt to form some kind of whole from chaos. This whole (be it within the man himself or between the man and his wife or between friends or members of a group or people) is of the imagination.¹ But the imagination takes intellectual forms; and these are matters of concept and definition. (Thus, when a Jew had the vision of God, he saw Jehovah; when a Christian, he saw Christ and Mary; when a Mussulman, he saw Allah and the Prophet: the imagination came to each in the form and name, *and*

primitive groups do not meet, in any conscious way, the definitions of the kind of group we envisage. Their wholeness is rudimentary, accidental, instinctive. But they lack, also, the vices of other American groups, ruling or ruled. They cluster about a church; and the church life is literally their life. They accept and pursue their lowly way with an integrity so entire that they are not even conscious of it. They are attached to the soil; attached to each other: and their instinctive harmony of worship, work and play produces the sweetest human material of which I am aware in our land. They are literally unconscious of the white world that surrounds them. But of course the first step towards this world brings these peasants into a collision with a denying spirit which soon disintegrates their wholeness—whence the neurotic and aggressive groups of Negroes in Washington and the North. Such child groups will soon die out, unless their instinctive wholeness is corroborated by a conscious wholeness from above. . . . Such groups are the loam of a nation. And our rulers are like gardeners who, instead of nourishing their soil, deplete it.

¹Of course, even so concrete a whole as the nation is imaginative. The patriot does not sense boundaries except through the imagination and the actual frontiers are symbols for him. In the case of the Jews in the Diaspora, the imaginative process is very clear. Their land was Torah and the tradition of Zion. The Talmud served to organise and to bound this imaginative territory. Rabbi Akiba said: "Build a fence around the Law." Essentially, throughout the middle ages, the only nationalists were the supposedly international Jews.

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with the implications, which he had intellectually learned.) Since this is so, it is plain what the consequence must be if some denial of wholeness lurks implicit in the definition from which the creative act departs. The man whose attitude towards life holds an unchallenged dualism, whose terms are themselves creatures of chaos, for all his benevolent deed, will be the creator of dualisms and disorder.

This is the first practical problem before our possible group. How will its members define self, person, church, religion, state, knowledge, etc., terms which form the basic attitude towards life? If they take over from the world definitions which are functions of its chaos, can they hope to transfigure chaos?

How close this danger is, we can see best by going back once more to Mediæval Europe. . . .

Here was an imaginative project of the Whole which even at its zenith worked violence and corruption. The dissident forces which crumbled it at last were there from the beginning. And the reason: *Christian Europe worked towards wholeness from definitions that were deniers of wholeness*. It regarded church, state, person as real things. It personalised the church, it personalised the state, it personalised the person. It tried heroically to blend these ones into One; and the attempt was so grandiose that by it alone man was exalted. Yet since the integers of this Body were bodies absolute instead of relative, static and eternal instead of functional and

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adumbrating, a separatistic principle worked through the epoch and at length prevailed against it. How this happened is a common story, although its essence has not been chronicled. The person, defined as *real* and destined for personal eternity (a contradiction), encouraged in his delusive absolutism and exacerbated by a world which constantly infringed his "sovereignty," came to convert the world into the instrument for self-salvation and to look on a future life as the sole life and goal. The church, absolutely embodied, worked for its own progress, despised the values of the individuals within it and lost the sense of being a mere relative function of a Whole beyond it. The state, thrown by these precedents into a similar spirit of competition, grew to an absolutistic monster and in the final modern break-up devoured its rivals. Within the imaginative plan of holy Union, egoism and anarchy were loosed by *definition*.

We have inherited intact the assumptions of dualism and of separatistic absolutism which rotted the Christian Republic. We no longer strive to join church and state, and the reason is that we accept them as separate entities: we have given up the effort and retained the lying definition that made it fail. We no longer regard each soul's separate destiny in heaven or hell as the main business of earth; but we still look upon ourselves as monarchs; we have debauched self-salvation into self-indulgence, retained the fallacy of self and rejected the ideal which that

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fallacy of definition made invalid. What we have lost of the noble dream of Mediterranean man is the nobility and the dream. All his obsolete terms we have held, which doomed fulfilment.

This then must be the creative outset for our group: it must radically recreate the terms that will form its behaviour. . . .

A. *We still look on state, church, person as Nouns. Our group must look on state, church, and person as Verbs.* If the state is a noun, it will stand alone and act for itself; if church is a noun it will stand alone and act for itself; if I am a noun, I will stand alone and act for myself. This is more than theory; alas! it is the burden of the story of the world. And it is the one concord of Wisdom. From the Upanishads to Spinoza the mind of man has proved that there can be but one true substance. The theory of this proof need not concern us, since at all times the common man by his deeds has proved it. Give any man the defining concept that his person is substantially real and he will act as if he alone were real. Preach unselfishness, morale, co-operation, brotherly love and God in rebuttal of this definition: they will be reeds in a torrent.

1. The man who has been taught that his "I" is a true noun will transmute the world into functions, adjuncts, verbs of his ego-subject. He will be an atom of Power, creature and breeder of chaos. "I" must be a verb of which the Whole is the subject.

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2. The State which by analogue conceives itself as a noun will be a dissociative, devouring body, drawing to itself all the energy and life it can. It too will act as if it were alone—as if it were whole, as if it were holy. Classes, individuals, moved by this same absolutist impulse, will fight for the State's possession, plot and cheat to identify their "I" with it. The periodic hours of armed conflict between States will be but climaxes of the unending war of the individuals within the State. For, as Randolph Bourne said wisely, "The health of the State is war." The State must be a verb, of which the Whole is the subject.

3. The Church which conceives itself as a true noun will similarly drain all substance to itself. It will not serve, it will exploit and destroy. The health of the established Church is evil. Church must be a verb, of which the Whole is the subject.¹

In great measure it is due to our false definitions (the directors of the images which move us) that devotion to church can mean denial of religion; that patriotism is not alone the refuge but the creator of scoundrels; that self-pity, self-loyalty, self-fulfilment, even self-consciousness are masques of the most hideous greed. What counts in the church is what it

¹A modern democracy like ours lays flattering unction to itself for having disestablished the church. But we have done this, merely to establish the State, without a rival, in all the old absolutisms which once made the Church a monster. Essentially, we have done nothing at all. And of the two evils—the absolutist Church and its lay usurper, the State—surely the former is less sterile, since it holds at least the programme of spiritual action. The aspiration of no modern State will beget any form as beautiful as the Gothic cathedral, or as true as the mediæval guild.

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does—its religious service. What counts in the state is what it does—its public action. What counts in me is what I do—my social, æsthetic behaviour. Separate these actions from each other and there is in the world a basic split which means disease. There is the denial of spirit to body, of body to spirit. There is death; and in a true sense we to-day are dead.

B. *The Whole, which is the one Noun and makes the man, men, state, church, etc., real in so far as they express the Whole, is not itself an object of contemplation: it is a subject which acts and acts through us.* The true mystic meditation is the deed. Prayer and art are one. The Whole exists through its enactments, and its enactments are we creatures of sense. Subject and verb are not without each other. Of course, this Whole IS (it has its place for chaos and frustration, for the numberless seeds which do not flower); but it is not for you and me, save as our lives create it; not for America save as America creates it. It is not “up there” like a heaven or god; not an object like a golden apple to be seen or, unseen, believed in. It is not in time and space at all, except as men’s deeds spatially and temporally create it. The organic Order which makes the Whole is a matter of *ordering*—is the experience of ordering by you and me. Our knowledge is our participation.

C. *Knowledge is a part of action: it is action aware of itself.* It will perhaps be worth the time of some of us (the others may skip to page 253) to verify this

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by going back once more. Looking for light on the immemorial problem: What is knowledge? what is truth? we learn the scant originality of human thought. For almost all of man's responses to this question are of one family. And the warfare between "truths" has been so ruthless, because it has been a struggle between brothers.

With various accent, this Family declares:

"You want to know the Truth? Well, here it is. Not there. Here! God . . . or gods . . . or oracles . . . or logic, science, reason, have provided it. Come and get it. Take it. Learn it. And be saved. Leave it and be damned."

Of this family is the Knowledge of the revealed religions, and of the cults which piece together shards of these religions. Even the creeds that reject revelation "know" in the same way. The Buddhism of Gotama is an instance. Positive Knowledge, it holds, is needless for salvation: the findings of sense are false since they are held within the lying Wheel of Time and Space. The secret is to get outside the trammels of causation; the way is specified—the seven-fold Path, the Goal is named—Nirvana. Stoicism, also: giving value only to behaviour of a certain kind, it reveals its *a priori* intellectual Knowledge. And the credo (now subsiding) of modern science. The successors of Bacon and Descartes inherited intact the kind of Knowledge of the schoolmen. In lieu of a Myth, they had faith that reason could yield up, from

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revelation of the senses, the precise full Universe. The popular Knowledges of our day are of this group: the doctrines of progress, of evolution, of materialism, of economic determination, even the scepticism which dogmatically denies Knowledge, infecting life with insistent goal-lessness: all procedures, indeed, whereby some specific aim or value or direction or process of life, intellectually conceived, or revelation or method of behaviour, is set up as the reason of existence. Seventh-day adventism, ethical culture, the Christian brotherhood of man, the communists' hereafter, in so far as they provide *the Truth*, are concoctions from a single pot of Knowledge.

Its ingredients can be decanted, as follows:

(a) Truth has an absolute existence, like that of a star or a book.

(b) Knowledge of the Truth can be possessed by the mind of man.

(c) Knowledge of the Truth is somehow independent of the knower who must "manage" to get it.

(d) Truth transcends the knower; yet he can discover it, and then contain it.

The Truth, then, is an objective entity (a noun) of which you, by the right method, can catch hold. The method may be baptism in a particular font, or fasting, or Yoga, or higher mathematics . . . no matter: the Truth is lodged somewhere, like the golden apple; and you must reach it, and clamber up to it, by a particular technic.

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Although still practically universal, it is important to note that this attitude towards Knowledge shows signs of dissolution. A thousand years ago, one dogma covered Europe (having devoured or destroyed its innumerable brothers). Now, that vast body of Truth has broken up; the offices of homuncular cults could fill skyscrapers in our cities. Christianity and Buddhism have become as towers of Babel. The grandiose Way, once lighted by flaring semaphores, is now a path so devious and minute that every man must go equipped with chart and lantern, in order to be sure not to get lost in the wrong path of his neighbour.

The reason for this decay of the primordial, classic family of Knowledge is, of course, that the science of thought has undermined it. Knowledge of this kind is intellectual and absolute. It is *learned* by the mind; it is *known* in inalterable reclusion from life's shifting currents. This was passable in a world where intellect was an un-self-challenged fetich; where the Absolute was simple and static; and where God was immobile either as a person or an abstraction.¹ Since Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant, Freud; since Newton and Einstein, this world is dead. The intellect begins to know its place. The Absolute has been transfigured: even matter has melted to a flux. The immobility which was the first principle of life—the unmoved Mover of religion, the absolute Measure of science—

¹The mediæval thinkers who made God an abstract essence, after Aristotle, were unconsciously giving him the same sort of existence as if he had been a person.

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is replaced by a universe of force and motion. Im-mobility has become an end (spiritual and physical) reached only in a diapason of motions.

Dogmatic truth, dogmatic knowledge of the truth, must go, barred by the same transfiguring attitude which bars the person as an absolute or noun. Truth or knowledge of truth, independent of the knower, is of course absurd. If reality is separate from the knower, he can win from it no experience—much less a truth. If not separate from man, reality is in relation with him. Any relation forms a kind of whole. The terms of a relation are not independent. Therefore, the truth of a reality is not independent of the knower who is in and of it, as an organic part and focus. There is no knowledge without the knower; there is no truth in which the knower is not an integral part. . . . Grant this, and truth, humanly experienced or known (no other truth concerns us) must partake of the relative nature of the person. A person cannot possess immutable or absolute truth, without being himself immutable or absolute—without, that is to say, ceasing to be a person.¹

The alternative is that a person possesses truth, in the same degree that he is a person: that is, in so far as he (being a verb of the Whole) *acts* the Whole. The Truth, then, is the Whole. Human truth is a dis-

¹Creeds, scenting this difficulty, have usually concluded that when a person knows the Truth he ceases to be a person. Hence all dogmas tend towards transcendentalism: Heaven, Nirvana, To-morrow, etc., etc., become the locus of Truth.

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tinctive articulation or focus of the Whole. The true person, as we have seen, is one in whom wholeness becomes a distinctive individual action: the true essence of the true person is a distinctive individual behaviour of the Whole. Such a person's knowledge is truth. *A community of true persons must therefore mean a community of truths.*

This is a premise that obliterates dogmatic knowledge. But it does not lead to a vague relativism, to a flabby agnosticism which invariably hardens into the kind of knowledge it began by scouting. It leads to *a true world* in which man, as man, has his organic share. It leads to a basally different attitude towards knowledge.

Instead of being static, abstract, transcendental, knowledge becomes a part of behaviour. It is dynamic; it *is* action. And it is progressively "true" knowledge, "whole" knowledge, "holy" knowledge as it acts more in harmony with all thought and action. Its growth destroys all tendency towards dogma.

Even conceptual knowledge is a kind of action, since it is the work of the mind, abstracting and measuring experience. We who are thinking creatures cannot get along without it. But this sort of action is a factor, with other sorts, in the whole of our life. Our life is a factor in the sum of actions which is the Whole, containing, yet beyond us. Therefore, even as knowledge of all kinds is action, action of all kinds, if conscious, becomes knowledge.

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The Whole of Europe was created and bound by static concepts, by intellectual, dogmatic "truths." When these gave way, energy flowed outward into actions which summed to chaos, since no conscious whole of any sort informed them and since the old static concepts broken from the Mediterranean whole were unable to cover them at all. These actions, innumerable, self-assertive, chaotic, well symbolised by the nature of the machine, are the world we live in. As we grow conscious of them we shall be able to transfigure these "actions"—including the machine—into elements of our knowledge. They will constitute a whole within us, in lieu of a chaos around us.

The principle of human life is growth. Growth, too, is action. Growth is action whereby the individual comes more close to wholeness: which is to say, becomes within himself less of a contingent creature, and more nearly whole. Any organic act which is not, as I have used the word,¹ an adumbration, we instinctively call the contrary of growth. Each life moves in the direction of the whole—or it shrinks, and it dies out. To act, then, in accord with the principle of growth is to move closer to the experience of wholeness. *And this is the highest form of knowing.* Wholeness consists of actions. The wholeness of the atom is made up of actions of proton and electron. The wholeness of the molecule consists of the action of atoms. The wholeness of our universe is the synthesis

¹See Chapters II and XVI.

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of all the acts within it. To know the truth, then, might be called an action of growth that is conscious of itself.

Even unconscious action is a kind of knowledge. The atom, the animal, the child, partake of life's knowing itself. But action, to be human knowledge, must become part of a man who is aware of himself: which means, aware of his own part, with other actions, in life's whole. For this, there must be a technic and a method.

Modern science has been the preparation for this new type of knowledge. The ancient world, whose ghostliness is the breath of our universities, our churches and our politics, had no view of action as a value; and no method for attaining consciousness of action. How could Hindu or Gnostic relate with his own awareness the action of a star, of a molecule, of a person? Unable to cope with life in the quick of deed, he abstracted from it a set of immobile principles—self, matter, thought, etc.—all separate from each other, and, *in their separateness*, known as truths. The ancients therefore made a virtue of their incapacity. The Hindu yearned for the Inert, calling all motion Maya. The Hebrew, in his stress of ethical behaviour as creative Wisdom, was the most prophetic and most modern of the ancients, but he lacked sure hold upon his marvellous intuition, and often backslid from the splendour of the Prophets into a conceptual Knowledge imprisoned in Torah,

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Talmud or Kabala, and no better than the knowledge of the Christian. The more modest Greek gave us the method: the method of modern science. Earlier science had looked at the motions of Nature (including those of mind and body) from a fixed intellectual and separatistic standpoint. Modern science strives to look at the motions in themselves, and this, ineluctably, has led to looking at the whole—to an *organismic* view, in physics and psychology, such as heretofore had been confined to the dreams of philosophers and poets. Modern science gives value to action, as the potential carrier of truth. And, in its results, it gives order to action. Actions of star, of man, of molecule, being ordered, are brought within the consciousness and wholeness of man. Man acts, in order to live. Now, he may begin to act consciously, in order to know.

Magic, say the Hindus, is a change of attitude: this means, a change of definition. Suppose our possible group defines as the one substantive, the one noun, the Whole of life. Then all that is within it will be an aspect, an action, a phase: all that functions wholly within it—expresses the Whole—will be a focus of action or a verb. The Whole acting in a certain way will be church, in a certain way will be state. *The Whole acting in a certain way will be you and I; and this intrinsic harmony of our acts, relating us to the Whole, will join us into a group.*

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No one would deny that one organism can act in numberless ways at once. (I for instance at this moment breathe, perform intricate acts of bodily existence, sit in a chair, digest my luncheon, listen to the sea, think, feel the impact of my fingers on the keys of the machine, watch my words, gauge their effect on you. . . .) The archaic "entities"—church, state, God, person, truth, knowledge, thought, time, space, substance—become correlatives. They are all actions and foci of action (science at last in this is corroborating metaphysics): actions in the Whole which, in so far as consciousness inspirits and informs them, become actions *of* the Whole. Endow the group's imagination with these *verbs*, as profoundly as the old delusive *nouns* have been indoctrined in us, and the magic is there, the cause of chaos gone.¹

3

The practical problem of our group remains. It was not practical until the bases of its outlook had been redefined. How the group members come together need not hold us. Perhaps they are all of a single race or of a city block or of a shop; perhaps they have converged to form some revolutionary "cell"; perhaps they have joined to discover beauty

¹Let it not be forgotten that the chaotic state of the world is also due to an imaginative process—a destructive one due to the break of its classic image of wholeness and to the survival of fragments of that image, each energised with the suggestion of being the whole.

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or to worship God in the way hallowed by their fathers. The deliberate change of attitude is what counts: it works its magic upon them.

The group they form is not a noun, not a substance bent on fattening itself or its members, on using the world as fodder for self-increase: it is a potential verb of the American subject. It is the means for its members of the kind of action and of the kind of knowledge which will express, *strictly in terms of the group*, the Wholeness of America and of life. The group will not ignore the inchoate American mass or react from it in hatred and defense or covet its treasures. It will identify its own chaos with the American chaos, and the working out of its own order with the destiny of American order. It will identify its highest will with the mystic American tradition. This will keep the group within bounds of itself and set it *personally* to work upon a national, a universal mission.

If the members of such a group be Jews, I think they will elect to be humble in the America of the fleshpots in order to be lords in the America of the Prophets. If Negroes, they will follow the leader who turns them towards themselves and not towards the salons of New York. If labourers, they will study the values of consumption which is consummation, with the devotedness they now expend on the problems of possession. If aristocrats of Brookline, they will continue the race of the great Puritans in

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action rather than by name; they will accept as one blood with themselves the men who make an active verb of the great Puritan tradition.

What tradition our group carries from the past—Africa or *Mayflower*—it will assimilate into its present life, search with its present mind. For it will know that the germ of all culture is one, and potent to be transformed in the flesh of every generation. It will search itself. It will nurture its own talents in order that it may be lifted up, through its men of genius, into self-knowledge and action. For the genius is the eye of the Body. But not until each cell is sensitised towards sight can the highly special optic nerve develop.¹ The group will know that to realise its image of America, it must realise itself; since itself is the *one phase of the Whole* over which it has dominion.

The men of the group will differ from the world not in the common rivalry of separate absolute selves, but in their consciousness of the Whole. Their separateness from the world will be no longer an accident of race or status to be passively suffered or arrogantly flaunted; it will be one result of their organic connection with the Whole. For these men will be separate in that they only know the Whole. They will accept their separateness because it lies in their sole knowing that they are not separate at all.

¹This is of course a biologic fact. Jules Romaines has proved that it is true even in man, through his experiments in developing sight in the blind.

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America to this group will be the imagined Whole—the image of a creative nation which it can work out (and work upon) in its own group life. There will be no time in consequence to clamour for “rights,” no breath to bewail “injustice.” Only eyes turned outward see life in these false terms; there are no rights, and there is no injustice. Our group from its definitions will know the egoistic falsehood which makes a man claim happiness for himself *from* a world where pain and disability are universal. Its members will accept their limitations whatever they are, knowing that the particular conditions of their life make it one with all lives which also have their particular conditions; and that these limitations are the condition for work, the stuff for creating. They will know that life’s oppressions are due to the oppression of a “self” clamouring to be absolute and eternal; that the way to be free is not to envy their brother who has the identical problem—whatever his place in the sun. Itself a microcosm of the Whole, the group will accept its chaos to transfigure it. It will look to itself, nurture itself, find both its rights and its injustice in itself. And being truly of the Whole, its work will be a universal action.

4

The actionable Whole is within: hence for a long time at least the work of the group will be variedly

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to experience, in the image of its ideal, its own life and thought as a phase of the American nation. For it is also true that the Whole becomes real as the self becomes known. It will give light by becoming luminous, not by preaching light or by starting fires. I doubt if for a generation it will be concerned in politics at all. Politics as a creative business seems to have been barred by our forefathers who, in their wish to protect minority groups, have eventually disfranchised them. For they have put the power into the hands of the majority, who of course are ruled by demagogues and cliques. Our Constitution gives no voice to group articulation and any group in an appeal for political suffrage must first delete its essence by translating itself into majority, non-group terms. Revolutionary action is also, for the present, barred; it can be effective only in a world where there is already a group integration. In eighteenth century France, a group could creatively seize power, since it was in millennial relation with the whole: the bourgeoisie had been culturally formed by the aristocracy and could continue (as it has) the France of the kings when the kings failed. The case is not dissimilar in Russia. The Communists, it will soon be clear, have been culturally created, less by Marx than by the ages of the Russian Church. Now with the recreative stimulation of the Marxian Idea (which like the old Church has a Mediterranean base—Jewish and Platonic), they can continue the Russia of the

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Church since Church and Tzar have failed.¹ But no group in the American chaos is so close to being born into relation with the potential American Whole that it can risk direct action on the mass without the certainty of being lost in the blind mass momentum.

5

The alternative is not quietism. (Indeed, quietism is a false concept, in that it implies a static individual separate from his surroundings.) Our group, since it organically lives, will not be sterile. Its members will be superlatively vibrant centres wreathing forth. It will move persons beyond its domain; it will beget groups like it. These groups will harmonise one with another, for the self of each will be an enactment—individuated and strictly focal—of the Whole which has its place for all. A group of such groups in America would leaven the whole lump. For we have seen that America is capturable, that it needs to be captured: nor would such leadership be a tonality strange to our land with its great mystic tradition and with the attuning spirit of its aboriginal cultures. It would be fulfilment.

In a symphony, each note rises and speaks and disappears forever. Many notes are grouped to make melodies and themes; are interwoven to fill chords;

¹The "materialism" of the Soviets is not to be feared, for matter is becoming spiritualised (endowed with life) in our laboratories at the same pace at which the "spirit" of the old churches dies. The materialism of Russia is religious. Revolutions change nothing; they at best fulfil. Otherwise, they fail.

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and these, too, tide and fall. All the innumerable notes lift their instant voices, and pass, and only the symphony remains. Such would be our nation; save that its creator would not be "outside" the music. He would be the individual note, itself—the group of notes, building the structure of the Whole by knowing the Whole and by living it, personally, in its several parts.¹

¹I have resisted the temptation to dwell in imaginative detail on the genesis and behaviour of our group: how it might get together, how persist in the hostile milieu, how survive economically without breaking its spirit, how that spirit will work with problems of economic revolution, how future crises and disasters might bring it the opportunity to emerge to leadership, how it could meet the dangers of corruption, caste, Power, etc., and yet lead. These matters do not belong in an abstract introduction to a philosophy of American life; they are too concrete and involved. They will find their place in another book. . . . One more point: The term "symphonic" applied to a vision of American *peoples* is used by the school of Cultural Pluralism of which Horace M. Kallen is the best known exponent. (See his "Culture and Democracy in the United States.") This theory, which after the War, boiled over the brim of the Melting Pot, has of course no relation with my thesis. It proposed that the various ethnic groups of Europe become perpetuate here in colonies of immigrants and of their descendants. America itself was to provide a loose political Federation, an economic chance with a rhetoric of the "new world" and of freedom thrown in for good measure. There is a tissue of incredible assumptions in this picture: among them that ethnic forms from abroad persist and do not agonise in America; that geography, climate, economics, politics are not themselves culturally and hence racially transforming; that the American national spirit is not itself a dynamic agent of psychological, cultural and religious metabolism. Blood may be thicker than water but it is not much more cohesive unless it lives in an atmosphere of pressing aims. Without such an aim (and the America of these cultural pluralists is utterly wanting in dynamic vision) blood soon turns to water; with such an aim, if it is new as it must be in a new world, blood is soon racially transfigured. Moreover, this school proceeds on a strangely unmusical idea of the symphonic form: it presumes that a lot of instruments playing their own perpetual tune will somehow make a music together if they leave each other alone and smile during their pauses. Of course, only the instruments unified in the one Idea of their music, which they express and variate according to their individual scales and timbres, can play a symphony. This idea of Wholeness—personal, mystic, compact, myriad-formed, imperious—is the dynamic aim of my book. Also I do not see why a group such as I envisage should be exclusively or predominantly of a single ethnic source. Why should not a number of farmers, miners, students, artists, etc., conjoin as creatively as Scan-

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dinavians or Negroes? The opponent dogma of such men as Lothrop Stoddard, assuming that the descendants of the colonials must rule because the colonials ruled, is of course nothing but a fallacy of the undistributed middle. But whereas Stoddard and Kallen are alike in their failure to estimate the effect of America on the soul (whether the soul be nordic or Negro), in their failure to sense the need of a transfiguration of those very elements which compose a race if a new world is to be created, and in their failure to provide a dynamic *forming* value for this purpose, Stoddard at least desires that America become something more than a department store for imported national notions. . . . I believe the best impetus of the cultural pluralists has derived from the Jews who, rejecting the absurd ideal of the melting pot, have tried to rationalise their need of being both Jews and Americans. (The melting pot may be a fact. As an ideal, it merely masques the yearning of some members of a race to lose their racial identity: it is, hence, a disguised racial suicide-wish.) The Jews have misunderstood both terms of their problem. I intend to devote a volume to the rôle of the Jew in the modern world and in America. Its relation with this work will be clear.

XIX: RUSSIA. EUROPE. AMERICA

1

ALL truths to the eye of the egoist are paradox; for truth contains all aspects of an event and the eye fixed to one cannot admit the others. Thus the truth that the destiny of the American nation depends on the life of groups; that an America striving to be uniform will remain formless, but that American groups striving to realise themselves will realise America. Thus the truth that man and men are real only as they live the Whole, and that the Whole is real only as it is lived by men and by man.

These words will be read by a person; even if they are read aloud in a group, always the person will receive them. Therefore I reserve the practical essence of our problem—the problem of the person—to the last: I wish to close face to face with my reader. Before that, there remains yet one penultimate matter: the question of public issues as they effect the forming of our group. . . . Of course, with its transfiguring definitions, the group will not feel the antithesis of private and public, of personal and external. The difference between them will be one, merely, of *limitation of action*. As the group becomes more knowing (in its sense of knowledge as organic ac-

tion) its immediate deed will spread to include behaviour in the kind of issue called public. This does not mean that it will necessarily "go into politics" or "effect social reforms." In order to be clear within itself, it will have an attitude towards social problems for it will constantly find that its most private life adumbrates to the outside world and that the outside world challenges its own life. By solving these problems, moreover, it will absorb the life that they contain and grow towards truer wholeness. Public issues are the medium wherein the group will win that sense of limitations without which it cannot achieve wholeness. The true self (personal or group) is a focus of the whole. It overcomes its false and absolute selfhood by growing aware of the outer world. This field of "opposition" provides the means whereby it can absorb into its own experience the life that otherwise transcends its focus.¹ That is why great issues make great men and join men greatly together.

¹This is the right approach to the problem of suffering and evil. Adversity by imposing limits upon self enables the self to transcend these limits by spiritual assimilation of what opposes it. Of course, if the opposing element is destroyed it is not assimilated and there is no growth. This same paradox of boundaries leads to the problem of infinite and finite. Only a consciousness falsely separating itself (as finite) from the whole could have invented the unreal antithesis of infinite. Neither finite nor infinite exists; both are dependent on the unreal assumption of an absolute separation; and neither can be known for they arise alike out of the false fixations of "self" or of "objects" as separate from the whole which then is left external to them. Similarly, eternity is falsely thought of as beyond or outside or as an "extension" of time. The religion which speaks of infinite God assumes the childishly separate and finite self. The mathematics that treats of infinite space, etc., is also rudimentary and anthropomorphic.

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2

There are many such issues. I select three because they seem to me of so general and deep a challenge that the American of whatever mind and temper is bound to find that they have touched him: so that they should be admirable means for self-search and for union among men. They are the problem of Soviet Russia with its allied question of the economic order; the problem of Latin America as a phase of the American Whole, and the problem of a hostile, receding Europe.

I. Unless all the empiric philosophers are wrong, from Aristotle to Karl Marx, we may assume it true that political power follows property. Indeed, to deny this is an antiquated dualism not much wiser than the old occasionalism which put a barrier between thought and action and then invented an external God to harness them together. Property is economic force, and so is government. So long as the struggle for food and the home absorbs mankind, government will be its weapon and its guerdon; political action will be the conflict, more or less disguised, for property-power. To free government from servitude to wealth, there is but one first step: man must be freed from servitude to wealth. This means that man must be freed from the *pursuit* of wealth; that wealth must become common. It does not mean that each man's personal belongings will be

less private than his own breath is private. The common things, indeed, are the most personal. Man will simply no more be permitted to compete for the needs of his belly, even as to-day he cannot compete for the needs of his lungs. Only then will government and culture be liberable into channels of the mind.

There is in Russia a government which professes this truth. How so practical a truth has come to be merged with mysticism by a famished people, how it may grow to be religion for all the empty stomachs of Asia (till they are full) is not our affair. Nor how close the Moscow programme comes or will come to fulfilment; nor how profoundly the rulers of Russia are working towards it. That is Russia's destiny, and we may follow Russia, according to our lights, with hope or with fear. The sole duty of our group would be to avow the sanctity of the Soviet profession, the universal value of the Soviet experiment: to keep hands off and to help with reverent respect.

For this experiment is crucial. It is nothing less than the attempt to raise the base of human life above the nutritive. The animal expends its energy in the business of personal or race nutrition. Mankind is still an animal. The man who boasts that all his time goes into business is the equal of the cow, all of whose time goes into grazing. The nation that solemnly asserts of time that it is money, and that plots, prays, breathes in the obsession of acquiring wealth is a pack of wolves on the hunt. And its idealisation of

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this servitude to the belly into a kind of "service" is as hideous a spectacle as that of any brute worshipping its lust.

The spectacle of the human masses living to eat has given this outrageous value to the winning of food—finally to the mechanics of winning food, even when food was not needed and to the symbol of power to win food. What man did with his power was of no importance. America, indeed, has proved that the lust for this power can become entirely dissociate from the need of food, without slackening in madness. For the Americans do not starve, yet are enslaved no less to an idolatry whose roots are starvation—the idolatry of possession and of gain.

And now in Russia, a race of genius rises from this base of servitude. Not we, not France and England, have risen from it. Less honestly but no less really than Greece and Rome, we are slave empires. And our masters, looking at this dawn of man in Moscow, buckle their swords, summon their legions. I do not know what is actually happening in Russia. I have read enough books, spoken with enough visitors and natives, to allow my ignorance. I doubt not, the Russian is still human: is still, as are we, a pitiful, wayward creature, sunk in violence. The point is, that he is working at a *method* to bring about what men have always professed. And this is holy work: this is a Cause and a soil for those who need a concrete thing to fight for. The business of our group will be of

course to plough its own fields; and its ways, like the fields, will not be Russian. But if our State threatened the peace of the high experiment in Russia, it would be the group's business to fight for it—to fight for the truth no matter how close to home were the lie.

II. Herbert Croly has pointed out that the defense by American liberals of Mexican sovereignty is really self-defense. If the mass power of the American jungle wipes out the variety of life in Mexico that interferes with the beatitudes of Oil, it is plain that kindred life in our own country must share the same fate. A greed that can destroy the "enemy" abroad can destroy it at home. This thought is a clew to the co-operation we must achieve with America Latina¹ for the sake of our own skins: it is a practical threshold to the profound, shamefully neglected truth of our linked destiny with our southern brothers.

We know nothing about them: know not the heroes of their independence, the builders of their domains, the writers of their epics, the makers of their arts, the cultivators of their crafts, the educators of their chaotic, potent peoples. Our ignorance cheats their impulse to know us. A principle called the

¹What could be more symbolic of our embryonism than the fact that we lack *even names*? What is our America? Even the conglomerate phrase United States is not exclusively ours. And the other America? To call it Latin-America, Indo-America, Ibero-America, or severally Mexico, Central America, South America, are equally inadequate. Only America is a good name; and prophetically it covers us all. I shall use the term America Latina as a reluctant convenience. Let it not be forgotten that America Latina is even less Latin than America Sajona (as they sometimes call us) is Saxon.

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Monroe Doctrine, pronounced a century ago when Europe was a menace and the American nations were embryos or newborn—a document, that is to say, which applies to no condition that is not dead, stands between them and us. Its impertinence to the facts is a symbol of our indifference to the spirit and human values south of the Rio Grande. It is a mechanism riling to America Latina and obfuscating to ourselves. A kindred mechanism of escape from facing truth is our insistence on regarding these American nations as mere *political* units. Politically, many of them are weak; and our dwelling on this and our ignorance of their *peoples*, confirms our lordly blindness. But their political instability is a negative issue of their ethos. They are peoples quick to ally impulse, ideal and act. Therefore, since they are new they are full of ferment; their lack of political moulds is a feature of their promise. It is because their politics is quick with life that it has not become a rigid and empty and indifferent dumb-show, like our own.

They are peoples rich in plastic genius; pregnant with ideal impulse. They have a deep sense of destiny and the persistent strain of the mystic tradition is wide in their lands. No less than we, they love Whitman, Thoreau, Emerson and Poe; and to these add names of their own which we ignore. Mystic America has become, in their crafts and in their letters, an organic undertaking. They struggle, above barriers of mountains and of economic weakness, to

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come close together. And it is not unlikely that this generation, with the airplane to help, will bring about their cultural union. It will be a symphony of voices, from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego; for the variety of their ethos is great and, in Plato's sense, they have the music.

With a wilfulness that is touching, these people desire to love the North Americans. They respect our genius; they read our authors; they learn from our great technicians. They want to love us, because they are learning from us and they need to learn more. They struggle at home against the anti-Yankee jingos whose hands we strengthen and whose empty mouths we fill with justified abuse. Constructive America Latina is often alone in furthering *our* great tradition. For we, instead of working with them, leave the word to the diggers of oil and to the diggers' diplomatic servants.¹

If we knew these Americans, we should know more of ourselves; for they have the heart of the matter—the creating of an American world that shall be more than the grave of Europe. This is the essence of our wholeness with them. Here, then, is another practical issue upon which our group might act. It might

¹A Committee on Cultural Relations with Russia is already active. Since this chapter was written, there has been formed a Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America, which should make a very great step in the desired direction. This Committee is the outgrowth of the Seminar on Relations with Mexico which for the past three years has held sessions in close touch with the Mexican Government and University. The man largely responsible for the Seminar and the new committee is Hubert C. Herring.

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work for the undermining of that historic symbol of our impertinence—the Monroe Doctrine, through the upholding of a true doctrine of American union. It might foment American relations not with governments, but through governments with peoples; relations of life and art, not of mere political and mercantile technic. Our business with South America will rest on a sound basis when it represents negotiations not between strangers but between brothers.¹

III. A study of America Latina returns us to Europe. From the agony of the Christian Republic, it rose also; and what we have said of the "last days" and of "the grave" of Europe may, with variations due to the peculiar status of Portugal and Spain, be referred to our southern brothers. The point for us to note is that in both new continents there lived at once new elements making America a life positive and germinally apart from Europe. Climate, geography, the primeval forest, the transformed Indian and Negro, the new mixtures of old races, Asiatic, African and Caucasian, were a fresh substance in this chaos, bound to make our Order—when it comes—an individual world.

¹On such a sound basis, I do not mean that we should make more money in our dealing with South America. There is no doubt that the less humanly and wholly you know a man, the more cash you can get out of him. That is why, if our real value continues to be profit, all the good-will protestations in the world will not increase our understanding, against our commercial instinct that understanding is a drawback to "good business." But, of course, a lucrative relationship is not always a safe and sound one.

RUSSIA. EUROPE. AMERICA

But if the Americas are, with these reserves, products of the Christian dissolution, there is still a third: modern Europe, itself. In recent years, much has been said abroad of the growing threat of Europe's "Americanisation."¹ When this word is employed by Europeans, it refers always specifically to the traits of the American Jungle and of its cults of Power. Personal will, the machine, herd-democracy, levelling from below, industrialisation, regimentation, property-worship, materialism, etc., are taken as American and as an external danger to the spirit of Europe. But we have seen that all these traits are products of Europe's breaking; that they are shreds and fragments from Europe's energetic Whole. If their prevalence in a land is to be known as its Americanisation, Americanisation is a process of the decay of Europe. Americanisation is a disease of Europe. Americanisation is a disease naturalised in America by men of European stock and European culture. Americanisation has been brought to other countries also. South America has caught it from the same source; and Russia and Asia are not free of it. But its first home is not America at all. Americanisation is rife in the centre whose rotting spread it: England, Germany, France. . . .²

¹The best portrait of this Americanisation of the old world, of which I know, is in Anatole France's "Ile des Penguins."

²Holding the term to its ingredients as we examined them in "The American Jungle" and the subsequent chapters, we see that the most enormous instance of Americanism is the career of Napoleon. For the peculiar rôle of Spain in this process, see "Virgin Spain."

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There are deep differences, of course. In the Americas, Americanisation is refracted by the essential genius of our lands and by the transplanting of the mystic Mediterranean tradition. Yet, for reasons we have studied, this complex process spread more unimpeded in our world, and with us became the fact. That is why it is fair to call it Americanisation; and to know it by its essential name: the disease of Power. In Europe, Americanisation has another kind of energy. The rotted culture of the European peoples no longer satisfies. Yet it is there, and impedes the Americanising process. The organic memory of Christendom is still so vital at its centre that it depletes the career of the lusting atomic will. Europe's great past is no longer valid, yet it has not been transcended. From this disequilibrium comes a deep dissatisfaction—a longing for the end of the past. One end is Americanisation. Americanisation, therefore, because it is impeded, has the value in Europe of an unattained ideal.

Europe combats this menace by proposing a new whole of Europe, to replace the lost Body of Christ. The tradition of *conscious Europeanism* may be conveniently dated from Goethe. Goethe had been nourished by Spinoza. His visioned Europe was a microcosmic Whole: a profound pantheism gave it value; it was both rational and naturalistic. But the world around this man was dissolving. The dualistic times worked against his message. Goethe himself was par-

celled *seriatim* into love poet, nature poet, poet of Faust, man of science, dreamer of a synthetic Europe. His mystic essence was segregated in his verse; his constructions of organic form were carefully divided between his biology and his politics. Hegel, who began so well, confused the Prussian State and Church with the Spinozistic Substance. Marx plotted his Whole on the dispirited logic of economics. Nietzsche unified Europe, by making it the matrix for individual Power. Goethe was a great disciple of Spinoza; there was no great disciple of Goethe.

To-day, the project of a new whole of Europe is a pitiful shrinking from the universal concept of a Christian Whole which once drew Stockholm to Seville. It is a skeletal affair (in a tradition that is dead, as with any other body, the bones last longest). Chiefly, it is defensive: defensive against the inner signs of death, and defensive against the births to the East and the West—against Russia and America. (Compare its deliberate process with the tide of morning life that once swept man from Ireland to Jassy!) The conscious member of the Mediterranean Whole at its height thought of himself, not first as French or European, but as Christian; Europe and France were afterthoughts. The modern European is a member of a country who rationalises Europe. The most common symbol of his mind is the League of Nations. If he is wiser than that, and understands the need of an inspiring principle to give

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Europe life, he turns pathetically back to Rome, or east to India or Russia. But even so, he is moved less by love than by fear and calculation. And only love makes wholes.

Speculation on the chances of some such transfiguring force coming again into Europe is not quite outside the compressed province of these pages. We have seen that the Whole called Christian Europe had a Mediterranean heart. It was not Atlantic at all. As the gravity of the Body shifted to the open waters from the Inner Sea, the Body began to break. The Atlantic in Europe was chiefly a force of dissent and dissolution. This does not mean that Jew, Greek, North African, and Roman were higher types of man than the Nordic. It means, that their culture was achieved; whereas an Atlantic culture of which the north European races may partake has not yet reached a synthesis at all. Ere it could, the Atlantic needed to be bounded by the discovery of the Pacific, even as the Mediterranean was bounded by the discovery of the Atlantic. The question is, which side of the *new* Inner Sea (the Atlantic Ocean) may be the heart of the new Whole? Destiny points to the Americas. For four centuries Europe and Spain have been creating us with the wreckage of themselves: this as we have seen is the essence of the work of modern genius, in discovery, in invention, in philosophy and in art. Here in the Americas have been developed the ideology and the technology of Eu-

rope. Here, from Massachusetts to Chile, has been lodged the germinal seed of the Mediterranean Body—the mystic tradition. And here, in our transfiguring sky, in our new earth, in our new race, is the Womb to receive it. When Egypt, Phœnicia, Crete put forth Greece, they had done; when Israel and Athens put forth Alexandria, they had done; when Alexandria put forth Rome and Byzance, it had done. Of course, history does not repeat itself; a series of vague similitudes is not a law. As Islam the hot tribes of the Desert, it may be that some fresh force will make a Form of Europe. But even if this is not its destiny, Europe is bound for many generations (as once Greece after its decline) to produce intellect and art superior to ours. Even a decayed maturity is more clever and more able than a dawning life. Life, indeed, when it is deep begins too far below the levels of articulation to be clever until it is mature (the smart elements in the Americas are the surface discards). It is safe to say, whatever the new whole of Europe—solely defensive or again creative—that it will produce statesmen, scientists, writers, artists, thinkers who, through sheer excellence, will threaten to dominate the world; and if Americanisation prospers in the land of its birth, Europe will also give us technical, mercantile and financial masters beside whom our Rockefellers, Fords and Morgans will be as children. Americanised or purely defensive, Europe will be hostile to us. Recreated by new spiritual

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life, Europe will be different from us and through its superior mental skill it will be a dangerous temptation to our unformed nature. That is why America must understand Europe, to be free of Europe; must cultivate its own garden lest it be overrun.

If our America proceeds in its Americanisation, as we have defined the term, there will be certain issues. South America, feeling itself threatened in its integrity and variety of union (like Mexico and the Caribbean, already) will grow hostile. It will consolidate against us, it will join Europe against us—for Europe carefully sues the South. Our dangers will be doubled, and our promise halved; we shall soon find ourselves alone, with a bristling world about us. But this will not be the worst. America Latina, in self-defense, will follow us in Americanisation. Those Southern powers (perhaps Argentina and Brazil) most capable of coping with the Imperialism of the North on its own terms will develop them at home: Americanisation will dominate America Latina and destroy the promise there. We shall have an enemy at home, younger and more expansive even than ourselves. For Americanisation is a disease which must disappear, either by our mastery of it or by its mastery of us. If it spreads, the white man will go down. Possibly the sun will rise on a Chinese world, from which this scourge has scourged itself away.

But if our America resists Americanisation, if we

follow the mystic and not the practical tradition, if we become a symphonic nation led by our conscious units and not a blind mass Storm whelming the world in our efficient darkness—if we choose Love and not Power, life and not death, then too there will be certain issues. America Latina will join us. For this is her destiny, and all her life yearns towards it. In this process of creation, there will be two Persons: we perhaps the male, America Latina perhaps the female. She cannot take the first step: she is too much the Responder. This does not mean that she is weak—any more than woman is weak. If we strike her in Power, she will find ways to arm and to destroy us. If we meet her in love, she will help to fulfil us. There will then be America, in the world. If Europe proved hostile, there will be America to stand whole against Europe. And if Europe proves creative and receptive (the more likely issue), there will be America to return good for good—to nurture Europe. Already the spirit of Europe, personified by its great men, turns to us not in self-defense but with the open heart of need. For the America which lies between Arctic and Antarctic, between Europe, Africa and Asia, is fabulous in spirit and in strength. It is Ophir and it may be Zion. If its wealth is not consumed into the ash of Power, it will be a sun for the world of men.

This disease of Power which it is fair to call Americanisation can be overcome alone by us. We did not

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create it, but we have perfected it. With us it is virulent fact; in Europe and the rest of the world it is still a morbid aspiration. You can neither fight a dream nor study it. But a fact can be studied, a fact can be fought. The issue of the world is hence the issue of the American fact.

3

Practically, as we have seen, all these great causes are the issue of the group. Only the compact and actionable group can hope to transfigure, from within, the American fact. But the essence of the group is the person. The issue of the world lies therefore in the heart of the American person. Not until we have men who look so close within themselves that they shall find there the issue of the world, is there hope for the world; not until we have men who pierce the golden lie of the world in order to dwell in the truth, will the world again live truly.

XX: BEGINNING . . .

1

WITH tragic need, America needs groups. Groups to capture our chaos as consciousness captures the sense. Groups to make bowels and limbs and heart of the American body; to be our brains and our spirit. The method of American life must be the group. . . . Why have we no groups? why have all the efforts, since America began, to form real groups failed always? Why do the modern groups, spiritual, intellectual, artistic, political, drop off or grow rotten or crassify into cliques? (Gangs, of course, we have: clubs, chambers of commerce, political parties are gangs.)

The individual who is false is insecure; and the individual who is convinced of his own separate, substantial ego is false. His aloneness, which is his conscious boast, is his unconscious anguish. He knows, more organically than all his proud assertions, that there is chaos and lie in him. *He distrusts himself.* Therefore, he distrusts others; particularly those who are most kin to him and with whom he will strive to form a group. This basic, though unconscious self-distrust distils the aggressiveness, the greed, the envy, the weak faith, the falseness, the laxness, which rot the group into atoms mutually repellent or into a

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clique bent on self-indulgence. And that is why there is no American group. And that is why there are American gangs. For the gang is the anodyne for insecurity; it suffuses the ego into the herd and warms it with numbers.

If the method of American life is the group, the method of the group is the person. There can be no integration of America without the group whose sense of the Whole will make it whole; there can be no group without the person whose sense of the Whole is his life. But there can be no person of this kind without a method to create him. (The mysticity of groups, lending them virtues beyond the stuff of their members is false. To place half rotten apples in a barrel does not heal them.)

Thus far we have come. We have moved with open eyes through the wondrous jungle of our world—under its carapace of “order”—where all lives and all deaths join pregnantly. And we find ourselves. What can we do with ourselves? . . .

The mere desire to do or to be anything is futile. Into the chaos of good intentions, all words and programmes fall like dust on a sea. The modern man, we know, who sets out to act directly on the mass will be like the fly which thinks it turns the wheel. Since our democracy is an unconscious creature, enslaved to Power, captained by blindness, calling its blindness light, there is no hope in serving it on its terms—and on any other it will not attend. But the mere desire

to serve truth in our self is also vain. What each of us calls self is a maze no less blind, no less imperiously captained by its instinctive lusts, than our democracy. True creation within any substance—though it be the stuff of our own flesh—must be preceded by a compassionate detachment. We cannot transfigure clay, granted we can grasp it, if our hands are clay. We cannot transfigure the world, while each of us is in the state of the world. We cannot create a group, while *we* are chaos. The transfiguring must first be in ourselves.

How is this to be done? I have looked into the deeds of men: seen their behaviour in what they call religion, government, war, and in what they call peace: their doings in business, play, family, friendship. And I conclude that men are not better than, or different from, myself. I look into the deeds of myself. I know that love of beauty, the sense of the splendour and the holiness of life are in me; yet I know that these fair devotions have not prevailed against the falsehood and distemper that make the life I have lived. I look again at mankind. The same devotions are there. All men, like me, love beauty, bespeak the good; yet their history like my own deed is shame and violence. If devotion to what I call truth has not transfigured me, it has not transfigured the world. Like me, mankind professes peace and loves war, despises Power and dies to gain it, believes in justice and practises disaster, knows it is One and

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rends asunder. All the study of my conscious hours has not prevailed against the chaos in me. All the scriptures of Wisdom, I conclude, will not prevail against the chaos of the world—this chaos of which America is archetype and product.

2

What is needed is a method for achieving specific controls within us, as sure as the method of the modern chemist: a method as precise for “making us over” according to our ideal as the method of the engineer who turns the iron beams into a bridge. From the standpoint of a *methodology of behaviour* the culture of mediæval and modern Europe is an orgy of sentiment and unorganised intuition: by contrast, the archaic cultures of the East were far more scientific. The Hindus, for instance, after the Vedic epoch, developed technics for transfiguring man according to the exact principles of their ideal. Their ideal, their sense of life, are in no way ours: hence their methods cannot be for us. The “eastern” cults rampant in our day are dishonest or confused, precisely because they pretend to import a method for results that are the contrary of what that method was designed to effect. If, then, for a moment, we turn to one of these ancient methods, it will be but to see more clearly how a method of behaviour works.

Long before the age of Buddha, the Brahmin

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adepts worked on themselves to attain specific ends. In the "Digha-Nikaya" and the "Majjhima-Nikaya" of the Buddhist Pali Canon, we have an explicit description of such a process:

"In this method, brethren," the Buddha is made to say, "a brother goes to the forest or to a lonely place, and there sits down cross-legged, and holds his body straight, establishing concentration between his eyebrows. Then he breathes in mindfully (aware) and mindfully breathes out. As he draws a long breath, he knows, 'A long breath I draw in.' As he breathes out a long breath he knows, 'A long breath I draw out.' . . . With the thought 'In full body consciousness I breathe in' he trains himself. With the thought 'In full body consciousness will I breathe out,' he trains himself. With the thought 'Calming down my body compound I will breathe in' he trains himself. With the thought 'Calming down my body compound, I will breathe out' he trains himself. . . . Just as, brethren, a clever turner . . . when he gives a long pull to his lathe is aware 'I am giving a long pull' . . . even so does a brother train himself. . . . Thus he abides regarding body either in its inner or its outer state or both. He abides observing the rise or fall of things in the body, or the rise-and-fall of things in body. Or else with the thought 'It is body' his mindfulness of body is established, just sufficiently for him to know its existence and to become concentrated. Thus he abides detached, and he grasps at nothing at all in the world . . . etc., etc.

Thus, brethren, does a brother abide in the Contemplation of body. Then again, brethren, a brother when he walks is conscious 'I am walking' . . . etc., etc.

Then again, brethren, a brother examines this same body upward from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. He regards it as something enclosed by skin and filled with contents of divers kinds *as a thing impure* . . . etc., etc.

Then again, brethren, suppose a brother sees a dead body

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thrown away in a charnel field, one day or two days or three days old—bloated, black and blue . . . and he compares his own body with that, saying to himself: ‘Here is this body of mine, it is of such a nature as that, it has not gone beyond that’ . . . etc.

In the same way, brethren, a brother when feeling a pleasant feeling is aware ‘I feel a pleasant feeling’ . . .”¹

—and so on, through the contemplation and mindfulness of feeling, of thought, of ideas. The aim in this Buddhist method was of course to free man from “this death of life,” to get him off the Wheel and onto the Ariyan Path which led to the absolute, immaculate Life called Nirvana. The Buddhist was a transcendentalist with dualistic definitions. Truth was “beyond,” real life was unsubstantial and different from matter. All that arose from sense and from earth was Ill. And “the Way was to the Ceasing of Ill”—to the complete transcendence of percept, emotion, thought and even dream. The method of which I have culled extracts worked scientifically towards this goal. It was an imaginative process realising in the adept his own definitions. A definition of a word is its articulated image. The “mindfulness” or self-observation created the desired image of the world: the image, in this case, of all sensory, emotional, mental being as impure, as outside the “I,” the image of the adept’s own body as part of this impure, external being and as also outside his “I.” The adept, there-

¹Taken from the translation of F. L. Woodward in “Some Sayings of the Buddha”; Oxford University Press.

fore, in his mindfulness was merely imagining life as he already defined it—he was realising the image of his own definitions. And now by the image, he actually moved himself, made himself over, according to his values, since man is moved by his images, and only values experienced as an image are cogent to move him. That is why the method was a pure example of *applied science*. Forces of nature were used to gain specific ends. In this case, the forces and the ends were internal—not objective and external as with modern applied science. Man was brought gradually to reject the external world, and his own emotions, thought and body, by the constant process of imaging them as outside him and as impure. He induced in himself the state of profound dissociation from all activity, a state seemingly disembodied, undifferentiated, very close to death.

Of course, such a method is not for us; since it is the working out of values and of definitions which we properly reject. The point is, that here was a method for moving man *in his own desired direction* by cutting through the clouds of precept, morality, exhortation, and by establishing in him a dynamic image *which did move him*.

The Egyptians also probably had such methods; the legend of Pythagoras personifies their carriage from the Nile to Italy and Greece. We know very little about the Pythagoreans and the later Attic mysteries; we know enough to guess that as Greece grew

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away from Egypt, the methodology of man decayed. Æschylos seems to have been an Eleusinian, however; and there is reason to believe that the Greek tragedy as he wrote it was a decadent exercise profanely borrowed from some such method—an exercise in which the adepts perhaps externalised their passions by acting them out in a dramatic image. In Plato's age, the Greeks had become talkers. The exact applied science of human conduct was replaced by rhapsody and dialectic. Meantime, the post-Babylonian Jews had also evolved a method. The technics of Hindu, Egyptian, Pythagorean were aristocratic and transcendental. They implied in their adepts perfect leisure, perfect aloofness from the rabble and perfect disdain for the world. The Jews who had no caste, who were democratic in that they took all men as spiritual brothers, and whose naturalistic creed had not yet been corrupted by contact with the transcendentalisms of their neighbours, needed a method wholly different. Since it had to be practised, not by hermits and nobles but by a people living in farms and towns, it had to be socially active and communally binding. Innumerable deeds of every-day behaviour were to be performed alike, and imbued with the significance of coming from a God who demanded "no vain oblations" but the service of ethical conduct. The 613 commandments of the Torah established the desired image. They worked "from the outside"—that is, they were handed down to the peo-

ple from Jehovah. They made an image of His presence, plastic and dynamic, in innumerable deeds: eating, sleeping, doing business, leisure, love, etc., were all acts pregnant with the Lord. The method produced a compact people whose terrestrial conduct was saturated with percepts moving them in a desired religious direction.

Again, we are very far from the aims and values of this ancient method: again what concerns us here is the precision with which the Jews made themselves what they willed to be, by creating a complex image which corresponded to their values and which moved them. The weakness of the Mosaic method, as it endured unchanged through changing ages, explains the Christian revolt. It lay in the assumption that the soul was a simple, invariable unit which would respond in all cases alike to the enhancing and inspiring influence of the commandments. The method worked in a compact, simple group uninvaded by intellectual currents. When the group was opened, the individual arose; the group became incoherent and the group method lost its delicate control. It became a clumsy external Law or a mere emotional tradition. The process of reforming the method in order to meet the new conditions was the subtle labour of Talmud, Responsa and Kabala. Meantime, already in pre-Christian Israel, revolts against the Jewish method, attempts to reinspirit it, were rife. Paul expressed the revolt by rebelling against method altogether.

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In this crucial hour, a decadent Jew of enormous genius was encouraged by the vague intellectualism of decadent Greece. The Platonists, with their dialectic, their faith in the absolute word, their transcendental disparagement of earthly deed, moved Paul to the belief that the magic of his own new definitions, since they sufficed *him*, would suffice all people. What was needed was grace and faith: the fresh image of salvation. Christ's life had been factual method enough for the sons of Adam; let them leap at once into transcendent birth. A method whereby the Christian images would be naturalised humbly in the man through his every-day behaviour smacked too much of Torah; it was beneath the exaltation of Paul—beneath the arrogance of his intellectual conviction; possibly it irked his political sense which told him that too precise and matter-of-fact a means might impede the spread of his church. Paul's protest against a decadent method became an assault on the tradition of method.

This assault was inherited by the Catholic Republic; and the anti-methodical tradition has been a chief weakness of the Christians. By means of it, like a gifted adolescent whose rebellion against his sire keeps him from growing up, the Western world has lurched through the ages—poised for a flash of intuition on the edge of emergence and forever sinking back into its darkness.

Man's inner life was intact; God had created it and

Christ had saved it. Therefore, the methodology of Europe was directed outward. Work was to be done on stone, wood, iron, cloth, on soil and sea, on lands beyond the sea; and on the stars, and on the body—nerves, muscles, blood, the mechanics of the brain: work was to be done on every *thing*, but never on the soul! This incredible stupidity is the burden of the history of the West. Europe has had a scientific culture of the *object*; an unscientific, sentimental, purely instinctive culture of the *subject*.

Meantime, our philosophy and science were crumbling (as we have seen) the assumption on which rested this indifference to a methodology of behaviour. This assumption—when it was not that man had been vicariously saved or damned already—was that man could be moved by a *word*! an astounding intellectual error into which the most archaic Hindu was too intelligent to fall, since he knew that man adjusts any word to his own desire, that the mind itself is moved by the emotions and formed by the “currents of the body”; and that if intellectual values—words—are to move us a technic must be applied to retranslate them by means of the imagination into affects and percepts. This, and much more, all destructive of dualism, intellectualism, predestination and the “Word,” our modern thought at last establishes. Western science converges with Eastern Wisdom into the need of a science of man.

The archaic methods are barred, for their values

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and ends are not ours. Hindu and Pythagorean separated thought and matter, truth and conduct, man and mankind. In the dualism of their definitions, they were led to seek life by denying life's stuff; their method made a truth without substance and left substance without truth. The results we know: the practitioner remained effectless, and life remained rotten. In other ways, the classic method of the Jews was designed to create a Whole which is not ours. But the precedent of these old technologies can lead us.

Our modern discovery of the East enriches us in a way very different from the popular idea. We—the intuitive, unmethodical West—can learn from the Orient above all *an applied science*. Our own acceptance and sense of life is profound, our imagination is plastic. We are at last getting over the archaic transcendentalisms of our creeds—which never were firmly founded in us. In our democratic vision of mankind we possess the most dynamic (and most dangerous) of creative forces. What we need most is what we fondly think we have: a human science.

We know what we want: men who will act as conscious integers of the Whole and who will thereby create it. Create it, in our America which is the paradigm of the world. The basis for a method to create such men is in Spinoza. *Actio sub specie æternitatis* is a concept so revolutionary that not yet has the world understood it. *It is a metaphysic considered as an ethic*. It proposes the image of life as

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holy and Whole, not because of a theory, a faith, a God, a post-terrestrial destiny or a prenatal promise, but *in so far as behaviour is whole*. Yet even Spinoza was too near the intellectualism of his age. He leads to a method for acting God by imaging God; and having given his good reasons assumes that reasons suffice. He does not suggest the practical transliteration of his reasons into deed. Modern psychology and science are a series of integrations of Spinoza's proof that the Whole must be *human behaviour*. They establish the unity between energy and substance, subject and object, mind and body, man and men, etc. They show that no single phase of life is real save in so far as it is organised and energised in all the other phases. They show that every phase of life is some kind of behaviour. Our need, then, since we would create the Whole, is for a method whereby our values can be naturalised into terms of actual living.

A method to translate the idea of Wholeness into the image of Wholeness and, by means of the image, into the experience and behaviour of Wholeness. . . . None of our modern thought works out such a method. All modern science is a threshold. . . .

3. Notes on Method

I. If a woman who is afraid of snakes sees a stick in the road and thinks it a snake, she will act as if there were a snake." She has the image of a snake

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and the image moves her. Even if the snake is really there, the image moves her. Convince her that what she saw as a snake is a stick and she will recover: the image will go. She will smile now with the dread word snake in her ears and even on her lips; whereas she screamed with the imagination. . . . Let this serve to remind us that a word or what we call a "fact" is weak compared with an image; that a word or a fact does not move us, unless it creates an image in us; and that even the truth moves us only as it forms an image.

Now, my purpose is to move myself in a certain way; therefore my method must be to establish within me the image that will ineluctably so move me.

I wish to live—which means, to act, feel, think—as a phase and function of the organic Whole. I wish to live so that this Whole—its health and beauty—will be expressed through me.

To "know," because I have read the arguments of the Upanishads, Paul, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Bradley, Whitehead, Dewey, etc., and read the dreams of the poets, that I as a separate absolute entity am a falsehood; that physiologically, psychologically, environmentally, sociologically, I am a product, an aspect and a part of the Whole—the Whole that may be adumbrated to include race, cosmos, God: to know this in the intellectual sense, is not enough. To know this *against the image of myself as separate and absolute* is not enough. To experience this, in moments

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of ecstasy that fade to the "normal" separatistic image—exceptional memories to be treasured and repeated, is not enough.

What I need is to establish within me *the image*, to sustain and nurture within me *the image*, of myself as part of the Whole. If this image is in me, I shall act by this image. If it is not in me, I shall continue to act by the contrary image—the instinctive image engrained in my flesh, of myself as a separate, absolutistic being.

II. How is this new image to be created in me against the very grain of my flesh and beat of my blood? Here the archaic methods help with a suggestion. The method of the Hindu was to be mindful, at each intimate moment, of his physical self as an impure external process: thereby he gradually reached the image of all life as an impure, external process and of his separation from life. The method of the Jew was to make his most intimate physical acts the specific image and dynamic form of a divine behest; thereby Jehovah became immanent in his day and his world. By analogy, I must begin by observing myself, *as within the Whole*. I must begin humbly, like the Buddhist or the Jew; else I shall not begin at all. I must begin with what is nearest, humblest, most crucial—*my body*. The method is, then, to "prehend my body" (Dr. Whitehead's word)—to *take my body* as within the context of life.

This taking myself or self-awareness is of course

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the forming in me of an image. The image should be as immediate, tactile, prehensile, organic—as little conceptual—as my imaginative powers, growing with exercise, can permit.

At the beginning, it may well be that I cannot imagine my whole body. Then I must begin with what I canprehend: my voice, my breath, the feel of my eyes, the movement of my limbs, etc. And in the beginning, it may be, that I cannot “place” these details of my body within the imagined context of all life. Some context, then, must be imaged: perhaps merely my room or the chair that holds me or the persons around me. And this context must gradually be enlarged. But some context about my body *must be imaged at once*, in order to give to my body the external dimensions which will make it a focus of a whole beyond it: *the external dimensions which will make it real*. (Here is a crucial difference between this method and the Buddhist—from which such modern cults as Gurdjieffism are derived. It was known by the Hindus as well as by Aristotle, that any object can be realised only by the sense of the external which delimits it. To “observe” your body *alone* is therefore to lose your sense of the body—to make it unreal, *which was what the Buddhist wished*.)

My sense of my body, within this imaged whole, will be sharp; and the whole in which it moves may be merely atmospheric. This whole, with practice, will become more precise—which does not necessarily mean more spatial. It will adumbrate to hold aware-

ness of persons, environs, in relation with my body: and finally it will become the sense of the whole of life.

III. I must continue, with the new surety which comes from practice, to "take" my physical self as part of the Whole, making my body always the focus of the image. Gradually, within my body, feelings, emotions, even thoughts will be observed: they will take their place in the image, their part in the Whole. They will lead out to persons and objects: these will take their places as co-ordinates in my graph of the Whole. These emotions and thoughts within me must not be criticised by me; nor must I endeavour to change them. To do so would be to act on myself from the standpoint of my absolute self. They must be serenely accepted; and *their readjustment within the image of the Whole* must bring about their change. This holds also for my attitude towards persons. Not my opinion, but *their transfigured relationship with me within the Whole*, must act upon them.

Always, my body must be held as the nucleus of the image. This is necessary, in order that the image of the Whole be anchored within me: be *dynamically applied* to the events of my life which are centred in my body. For it is these events—my behaviour in the world—which are to be moved by the image. And these events have their nucleus forever in my body.

Words are dangerous, because they are so trans-

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mutable. Often, they can be made to induce an image contrary to what was first intended by them. Thus the image "I am part of the Whole" might easily vaporise into a theory, a faith, a complacent cloud of conviction which I might carry always with me, while my body instinctively went on acting upon the contrary image: that I was not a part of the Whole, but an absolute whole in myself.¹ Or the image might be corrupted into the delusion that "if I am part of the Whole, I am its centre!" But all this will be impossible, if the nucleus of my image remains the faithful sense and scrutiny of my body. No man who is truly aware of his flesh, humbly interwoven with myriad other flesh into the vast Design, can have delusions of grandeur. And no man who, possessed by some great personal passion, is aware of its dwelling within the humble precinct of his body will become its victim. Emotions can expand beyond measure. But not the true sense of the body—and therefore not the emotions bounded by this true sense of the body. . . . An allied danger obviated by this means is that of the sentimental *mysticalist* who swings from his sense of the absolute person into the undifferentiated sense of being the Whole—being "One with the All," etc.² Of course, this man has merely transposed his egoism, blown it into vast dimensions. The true sense

¹Christian Science, New Thought, Perfectionism, are horrible examples of such vaporisations.

²Here again, New Thought and Christian Science are horrible examples.

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of the Whole never loses the personal focus; no man who has it is "lost" in God; on the contrary, his individuation becomes more real as his participation in the Whole develops. The Whole lives in numberless strictly individual forms: no man whose image is grounded in true awareness of his small but irreplaceable body will ever lose his moorings.

To prevent such treacheries of the instinctive self, my image of my life within the Whole must centre in the most matter-of-fact realities of my life; it must be methodically woven into the tissues, bone and breath of my life. Then at length, it may saturate my life and replace the old absolutistic image which saturates it now.

This explains why the wise men of eld gave such attention to the body, to what man ate and how he ate, and how he breathed. I must develop the image of myself breathing, sitting, walking, listening, loving, hating within the Whole of which this creature that breathes, sits, walks, listens, loves, hates, is a function. If I lose sight of my body in this image, I shall have embarked on a voyage philosophic or megalomaniac, *leaving my acts behind.*

IV. To grow aware of my body in a few of its intricate, wondrous behaviours is very soon to learn *that only from the standpoint of the false absolute "I" is it an automaton: it is not an automaton at all, since it is never alone, being an exquisite focus of a Whole all of whose currents move through and inform it. A*

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loom threads impalpable vibrancies within the body, making it at each instant the beginning of a series of its own and a detail in innumerable series. This loom, I learn, is Life and it is not external for it lives within me.

The image of my body flows into the image of the "I" which feels, suffers, joys. Now I learn that my suffering is due to the image of myself as a separate, absolute being. This image seems to be physically in me. Any obtrusion on my flesh which my flesh cannot admit causes pain. And yet the fact of the obtrusion proves the falseness of the absolute image: a body that was a real whole could not be discordant, could not be invaded, could not be hurt at all. Likewise, the moral pains—jealousy, envy, disappointment, thwarted desire, etc., are soon seen as consequences of the same false image of a separate "I." For this is an image impugned by events. Suffering from events is the refusal of the self in the whole of events to play its part in that whole: it is the result of the self's desire, although it is woven in a whole, to be a whole by itself.

As an integer of the Whole, I function smoothly and enjoy. Any happiness is always an unconscious participation by the self in some whole. Therefore, the practice of this image of myself within the whole augments my happiness. My suffering is my engrained refusal of this participation. Therefore, the practice of this method allays my suffering. (I men-

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tion these details of result, haphazard, to show how the method is self-supporting. It repays for the great effort. The burden of the absolute ego is the chief agony of life.)

V. The rôle of the intellect in this method which is an imaginative process is to keep the image of my self within the Whole strong, clear and pure. Intellect is the preservative. There are two constant dangers:

(a) The instinctive danger. The image of the whole is forever being blotted out by passion and the pressure of events: forever giving way to the absolutistic image. The seed of human consciousness passes through a phase of differentiation, in which the ego appears absolute to itself. In this temporary phase, all of us are born; in it, almost all men die. It is the phase of our emergent race. Men hold to this absolutism of the "I," although it be the author of their pain, with an incredible fury.

(b) The transcendental danger. The method of observing the body and the feelings and behaviours of the self, *objectively*, suggests an imaginative separation of the observer from the phenomena observed. Such a separation undoubtedly makes it easier to "observe oneself" and to image oneself in a context. By means of it, the "I" becomes a sort of discarnate observer; the body, its feelings, even its thoughts, become external. Moreover, the observing "I" instinctively takes all value to itself, it becomes the "soul";

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and, since it is separate from the observed body, soul becomes separate from body. Thus the result is a backsliding into the first, instinctive danger of a separate "I." This transcendental dualism is the greatest curse of man; it has debauched almost all his highest efforts to know himself and to know life. By means of it, soul and its values are cut off from life and life—the observed—becomes a valueless dominion. We have seen this curse at its best in the exalted method of Buddha.¹

VI. The imaging "I" is but the intensified, conscious form of the observed—of the image. I am both imager and image, both observer and observed. I, imaging myself within the Whole, am an illumined focus of myself; and myself so imaged is a phase or focus of the Whole which becomes luminous in my life in so far as my life truly acts in consonance with

¹I have had intimate contact with only one of the many versions of Eastern cults and methods practised in the United States; but I am led by the quality of its leaders to believe that this one is superior to most. It was brought by Gustave Gurdjieff supposedly from Thibet to Russia and thence, via the Caucasus, to France: in London it was expounded by Ouspensky, author of "Tertium Organum," and in New York by the brilliant former editor of the London *New Age*, A. R. Orage. It is vitiated by the doctrinal separation of the observing "I" from the observed organism. But its dualism and transcendentalism is not honest like that of the Buddhists from which it is clearly derived. This "system" professes the monism, body-acceptance, and behaviourism of the West (doubtless in the effort to accommodate it to Western minds). Disclaiming all transcendentalism, it teaches a method in which transcendentalism is engrained: a method which is only valid if one has already accepted the values and definitions of a transcendental East. Is not this confusion typical of all our theosophic cults which blindly introduce into a modern world technologies of an ancient world that have no application to our needs, and that merely unfit the practiser for life in both? In making this criticism of the Gurdjieff doctrine, I wish, however, to acknowledge my debt to Mr. Orage, whose dialectic stimulated me, often through disagreement, to come to my own conclusions. . . .

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the Whole. Even as a "temporary means," to creating the image, there must be no dichotomy between what I am and what I do. This separation gets into the image, and destroys the essence of its purpose—which is to move myself as a function of the Whole by carrying within me the image of my life as such a function.

VII. It has been argued that this separation of the "I" from its observed phenomena (the body) is a "necessary pose" in order to achieve the detachment in which the body may be observed at all. The answer is, that this pose is not necessary for detachment and that, if it were, it would be one of those cures which kill the patient. Since my purpose is an image in which I am integrated with the world, how can I hope to get it if I start by disintegrating myself into an unfleshed subject and unspirited object? "*I am this body*" is a dangerous statement since it is falsely separatistic and even solipsistic: at every instant there come into the "I" elements of the world not strictly of the body. But to say "*I have this body*" is false no less. It is equally separatistic. It makes a division between the "I" as knower and possessor, and the organism as known and possessed—a division which implicitly throws one back upon all the archaic transcendentalisms which the modern world is combating. The premise is false; *and any observation from a false premise must bring a false conclusion.*

What if the image be expressed in some such

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words as these: "Not I am a body, not I have a body: *God—or the Whole of life—has this body of me—among innumerable others*"? There is detachment, since this image puts me with my body in its place as a mere integral part of the Whole. Yet there is no false or absolute separation cutting off the "I" which observes from the observed. The process of conscious self-awareness remains an organic part of my own organism—of the life and body of which I am aware.¹ The focus in my particular body becomes a means of apprehending the Whole in relativistic terms. And *my* stress of attention upon *my* particular body becomes pragmatic, since this body is clearly the one in which and through which I learn directly the experience of life; and since it is the only one in which and through which I can express my vision of the Whole and my function within it.

VIII. Two more points will certainly be argued against this practice. (a) It will be said that this image of myself within the Whole is too accepting: if I am a body of God where is the struggle, where the moral growth, where the principle of "evil" which must be fought in order to attain the "good"? This kind of doubt rests on a crude notion of morality and of "God." "God," as I here use the word, is the principle of Wholeness which I must labour to realise with my life. Except in so far as this Wholeness is made concrete with my behaviour, *God does not exist*

¹It might be more accurate to say: "of which *I* am *the awareness*."

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for me. To be a body of God means therefore to be dedicated to the constant business of growth towards wholeness. And this is struggle, since wholeness (read holiness if you wish) is not "natural" to my flesh and personal will. The struggle is between the images: the image of my flesh whereby I am a being absolute and whole within myself and the image whereby my self is a phase and potential focus of the Whole. If you believe this struggle to be an easy one, practise the method for an hour. You will learn how much less arduous it is to "have faith in God" or to comply with the six hundred and thirteen Mosaic commandments. *The struggle between images is the essence of true ethics.* Otherwise, ethics is a mere external code. The man who relates himself to life by the image of the Whole does not need to "repress bad impulses" within him. What are bad impulses but egoistic ones? impulses which run counter to the Whole which we all recognise in the word "reality"? In the organism which is transfigured to behave as part of the Whole the energy of all its impulses must also be transfigured. Such an organism moves as part of the Whole (since the image of the Whole so moves it): its impulses must move in accord. But the man who fails to transfigure his relation to life, so that he lives by his instinctive absolutistic image, can never do more than repress or "correct" some specific bad impulse. The false image remains; and its natural expression is the kind of impulse called bad. Re-

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press a set of such impulses, without altering the life perspective that brings them about, and they must find outlet in masqued forms which *ethically* are as bad as the original. That is why any method (Freudian psychoanalysis, Gurdjieffism, Christian Science, New Thought, etc.) which does not transfigure the fundamental image is at best a makeshift for producing a more practical adjustment to life. To repress undesired impulses may be socially ameliorative: it can never be creative. To become creative, the energy within our impulses must be freed from service to the absolute person, into nourishing the function of our person as part of the Whole.

(b) The other question certain to be asked is: "How, within this new image of myself as part of the Whole, will I act—how will I know *how* to act?" The answer is: Wait and see. Any previous answer would be dogmatic and rationalistic. Establish your image as best you can, and then behave as you are moved to behave. This takes courage. It may well result in the gradual break-down of the very structure of your life. If you do not care to run such risks, admit that you love your absolute ego and its fantastic "world" more than you do the truth; and let it go at that.

My security will be, under all, the dynamic acceptance of my body—the despised and denied body of Hindu, Platonist and Christian. For this body is now the locus and the form of spirit: the theatre of

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my acting of a part within the Whole. Since it is in relation with all life, the thoughts and passions within my body must take their place in that relation. My ideals and dreams, instead of being things in themselves or things apart from other things, become parts of my body's behaviour—parts, that is to say, of my acting of the Whole.

IX. I doubt if such a method as this can be practised by any one without a ruthless love of life. What most of us have, of course, is a provisional love of life. "Give us what we want," we say to life, "and then, *and just so long*, we shall love you." But of course this is not love of life so much as love of our own arrogant desires. Yet by means of the practice here suggested life becomes progressively more easy to love, because it becomes really our creation. In imaging the Whole with ourselves within it we create the Whole. It is ours. We have given ourselves to it; we have our share in its reality. Since we experience it as ours, although we die within it, we shall love it.

Sparse suggestions, these notes, of what—developed—must be the subject of a book. . . .

4

What we need is the creating of entire persons—persons in vital function of the Whole. Any method, however apart from this, is good if it *makes* such persons. What I have noted here is not meant as a path

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for your feet; nor as a lantern to hold in your hand. It is at best a spark—from my own efforts to make light for myself, wherewith to light your lantern. But though the result alone is of importance, let us never forget that it will never come through mere contemplation, argument and prayer; nor through mere intellectual study. The complacency of our pride moves me to this emphasis. The trees and the ants, the waves of the sea and the measures of the sun do not enforce man's growth. Life is not dependent on man's possible modelling of God within the sands of his time. If man is to be more than a passive mode of Life, long-suffering and momentarily agleam (as are other creatures in their way) with an entire splendour, he must begin to act. He must have a method for acting, at least as competent as his methods for building bridges.

5

The person, moved by the image of himself as a focus within the Whole, will act in unison with his sense of the Whole. When he feels, does, thinks, it will be no longer in sufferance to an "I" that images itself as separate, impervious, alone: it will be the Whole—the universe—God (choose your own word) that feels, does, thinks in terms of his own person. This man will be beyond the dualisms and dichotomies that have made history a mischief. (Beyond them, of course, not in the false sense which our dualistic lan-

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guage will suggest, as if he were removed from their substance: but beyond them, as a sphere is "beyond" its several circular segments.) He will be "beyond" faith and despair, optimism and pessimism, justice and injustice . . . false creatures, all, of that separation from the Whole in which one's lot, being "separate" also, becomes subject to the oscillations of hazard, doubt, and hope. He will feel neither self-importance nor self-pity; for the man whose self is a phase of the Whole cannot be overwhelmed with grief if self goes down, nor with joy if for a moment life focusses its glory and its intelligence upon him. He will be free of time's pressure; since he will know that time is a dimension of his mortal phase—absolute no more than he is absolute, a function of his person to be calmly and lovingly accepted in the image of the Whole which is timeless. He will be detached from what he is and does: not in the dualistic sense of being delivered from a Bond or Wheel, but in the true mystic sense of being in control of a condition. For the Whole is always in focus of its parts: the Whole is expressed only through particular conditions. Each particular condition is at once unique and universal. And to be such a conditioned part—as all men are—is bondage, only when man lacks the light on the Whole which he shares, and which makes his part real. . . .

Growing will be the grace of this man to feel all individual creatures, as he has come to feel himself,

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within the image of the Whole: to enter them and to know them: to know, above all, his life (whatever its state) as a domain wherewith like a king to act, and no longer as a prison wherein like a slave to suffer. Prepossession and compassion will walk with him, and make his way in the world a mastery and peace.

6

Free of the need of aggrandisement, since all lives in him, he will be ready to work. Ready to work in the sense that coal at a pitch of heat is "ready" to burn. To create, to have influence, will be but the luminous mechanics of this man. Of course, he will constantly backslide into the absolutistic image which he sucked with his mother's milk: he will be young in spirit, and there will be times when he appears to himself madly alone, breasting the impervious chaos of a hundred million. But however he suffer, he will persist. For if there had been another way for him, he would have gone it. No one is born—the first time or the second—*unless he must be*. If a man can subtly drug his soul, justify his darkness by the glitter of his possessions, remain in the unconscious sea of himself which is the unconscious sea of the mass, this he will do. But there are always men who cannot go down, and who must therefore rise. Life is a mother sending them to birth. Such men to-day, if they are shrewd, will find a way. They will come to know, looking with open eyes upon themselves, that

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there is no solitude; for they will behold cosmos within the self, eternity within the instant. And having accepted mortal loneliness, they will grow aware of other men in the American chaos (if there is one, there will be more),—others, in their way, living the same life. They will flare little fires to each other. They will draw close; they will commune and converge. They will create a group. And this will be a group that can live. Its individuals will be men with no self-distrust to rot their commerce. There will be action in this group, the deed of its luminous mechanics. There will be leadership for the blind American plasm.

7

We are dealing with a world that never yet has been; a world which may come true if it is true (as I believe) that man is still an infant and all his history a cradle story. But it may never be. The dangers besetting this recreated man are subtle and vast. I am sure he can exist. I am sure, if he comes together with his kind, that there will be strength to transform the pliant American world. The doubtful test is that which will decide whether such men, each overwhelmed by the mechanical and inner Jungle of our life whose every power is a scattering and a marshalling against them, can join; or whether they must live alone, each one; and die alone.

If this is to be, America as a high world is doomed.

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Perhaps this whole death must come to the white race, ere the whole man speak again. We may leave the issue to God who *is* the issue. To know is to act: therefore it does not concern us—you and me—to know the issue, since it does not concern us to act the issue. We are the process from which may issue Birth. Let us do our part.

I write these words for those who will look on the possible American doom with a light heart: and not swerve from their task of self-creation and of leadership. Although they know the dust that may lie in their hands, making America, they will not let their hands cease from the labour of beauty. They will pursue their way, because all other ways to them are void. Having found wholeness in themselves, what less could they choose? They will act each hour to make themselves more true and to bring truth to bear upon the unborn world: not for any issue in time or person, but for the joy of the eternity of the moment lived in the image of God.

The life of such men will be the fulfilment of America's oldest tradition. And it may be that in their fulfilment a world called America will be discovered.

Yorktown Heights, New York, 1927.

Beverly Hills, California, 1928.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: NOTE ON AMERICAN CULTURAL CRITICISM SINCE 1909

1. In the Era of Instinct

It was of the nature of the American fact revealed by Emerson, Thoreau, and by Whitman in "Democratic Vistas," that the lesson of these men for long should be ignored and without echo. (The transcendentalist, not the critic, in Emerson was courted; the naturalist in Thoreau, not the social student; and the generalisations about our literary culture that might have been gleaned from Poe were understood by no one.) Yet all these were foundations for a subsequent building of remarkable amplitude. America had a critical tradition in which no element was wanting. Able self search and self detachment, creative purpose, prophetic vision, the strict alliance of idea with scrutiny, were there to be deployed, when the age came.

The "muck-rakers" at the century's turn did not attain the threshold of cultural criticism. (Upton Sinclair represents them at their best.) They lacked general ideas, the power to associate, relate, prefigure. Most of them were melodramatists without authenticated facts; or noisy pedants. They lacked above all the lyricism—the afflatus of life. They were in touch only with the decay they described. Their work was to criticism what the message of the town-crier is to the epic. They served, not so much in that they popularised disgust with American abuses as through the disgust they aroused among the sensitive for mere muck-raking. They reduced the "reform movement" to its sterile end: to a fraction of the youth of 1900 they made the need of a new order clear.

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2. *The Revival of Criticism*

The new critical era may be said to have come to a birth in 1909 when Herbert Croly published "The Promise of American Life." Croly is a master of the historic and political background. He translates Jeffersonianism into modern, differentiated terms; transfigures the Hamiltonian values of caste and wealth into values of leadership; deflates the enormous rhetoric of our political tradition and integrates in modern terms what survives: the concept of the democratic nation *formed* by an aristocracy of spirit. He studies the relative dynamics, in such a potential nation, of individual and mass; lifts up the *person* as the crux of the democratic problem. His book is a remarkable work of practical idealism despoiled of its right effect by a too lingering traditional faith in political means. This background of belief in hardened forms is a trammel from which the author emerges only with his last chapter. If the vision that he attains at the end had suffused his entire book, Croly would have reached a different audience and changed, perhaps, the critical direction of the era that followed. His own struggle to be free of the naïveté of the classic American trust in old bodies as the bearers of new birth dims his purpose. At the outset of the critical era, a good army of rebels is alienated by this political fetich. Walter Lippmann's brilliant beginnings, "A Preface to Politics," 1913, and "Drift and Mastery," 1914, reveal the same mistake. Lippmann is strong in his analyses of human nature and illogical in his political conclusions. Having proved the need of a re-forming of spirit, he goes on to discuss the mere re-form of ends and symptoms. His admirable exposure of the discrepancy between our channels of public behaviour

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and the urge of American life seems to have brought him no recognition that the new channels will come only when our life has been transvalued and redirected at its sources, and that this is an activity which cuts far below the levels of political behaviour. Lippmann will not let his mind drag him to the conclusion which would be a beginning. He prefers neat ends to an untidy birth.

Out of this practical idealism on the wrong track, comes *The New Republic* (1914). With proper logic it goes against the grain of American growth, by supporting the War and urging our country to enter it. This strategy of *The New Republic* is based on the implicit acceptance of social, economic, political forms. They head to War, hence *The New Republic* leads to War. The editors work for certain values in our life. Believing that these may come within the old forms of public behaviour, they trust the War to abet them. The bitter fallacy splits the sparse squads of American intellectuals, turns them against each other. The War is a nemesis to every mind in which, however disguised, lurks emotional acceptance of the current forms: at the crisis, these forms impose the values of War. John Dewey accepts, after a moment of hesitation, and mobilises his pragmatic sanction. Upton Sinclair accepts, proving the nullity of his own values in resistance to a capitalistic order. Even Max Eastman falls: he alienates the love of the American youth by his miraculous discovery (after a conference with Woodrow Wilson) that the war aims of the President are somehow kin to the peace aims of Lenin!

Eastman, with his revolutionary friends, has founded *The Masses*. It contributes very little to our cultural criticism; but a good deal to the growth of our high journalistic arts. (Here, cartoonists like Art Young, Bob

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Minor, Boardman Robinson draw their masterpieces.) The writers under Eastman have lyricism and an intellectual programme. But they do not get down to a real study of the American fact, individual or social. Their romanticism is melodramatic. An imported programme impedes it. They conform to a European logic, which is almost as bad as to conform to current American values. Assuming the premises of European revolution, they fail to prepare the premises of the American revolution which they seek. *The Masses*, for this lack of native roots, is bound to evaporate and to shrivel. The more limited effort of *The New Republic*, positing a direct study of the facts, is more potential of growth—is of better service in creating a base for American revolution. *The New Republic* survives *The Masses*: survives even its own folly in furthering the War.

Meanwhile, a cultural movement along semi-literary lines gets under weigh in St. Louis where William Marion Reedy founds *The Mirror*. His cronies are men like Edgar Lee Masters (whose "Spoon River Anthology" first appears in his columns), Theodore Dreiser, Clarence Darrow. They are all rebellious wits, who have lost their old gods and found no new ones. Their idolatry is nineteenth century science. They clear débris and refuse in the American Jungle, with no understanding of the difference between rotted moulds and never-ending life.

3. *The Romantic Critics*

Croly's fidelity to atrophied instruments for transformation, such as politics and industrial organisation *within the confines* of Capitalism, provokes an opposing leadership. That it should arise proves the vitality of that hour in the critical scene. Its first master is Van Wyck Brooks

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who in 1915 publishes "America's Coming of Age." Here, and a little later in the *Seven Arts* essays, which become "Letters and Leadership" (1918), Brooks gives us a "usable past." He interprets the sources of American life not in terms of their *forms*, political, economic, æsthetic; but in terms of their *energy*. This feat, alone, assures Brooks an exalted place in the history of American culture. Instead of exposing or condemning, he releases. His tool (later aided by a fastidious use of the technic of Freud) is psychological analysis of a material which he attains by scholarly means. He breaks the moulds of the old America in which the youth are stifling; frees the living elements of that dead life, to be nurture for a new. Of course, the mood and method are romantic. That an afflatus inchoate, vague, sentimental, should rise from such a business was its chief value. Young America needs breath and food—energy and heat. Discipline would follow in good time. The scholarly mind in Brooks obeys the romantic will. He explores, delves: come up with a decaying compost—a soil for new seeds.

Brooks is not alone. In 1916, *The Seven Arts* is founded by James Oppenheim and myself; Brooks soon makes the third on the editorial staff. Four other men, although not editors, are of the inner circle, forming a "seven." They are Randolph Bourne, Paul Rosenfeld, Louis Untermeyer, Sherwood Anderson. By means of this group, all that is groping and experimenting in our æsthetic life (with a good deal of the kind from Europe—notably Romain Rolland and D. H. Lawrence) comes into a sort of protozoan contact. From John Dewey to John Reed, from Robert Frost to Dreiser, from Marsden Hartley to Ernest Bloch, from Mencken to Leo Stein, from Amy Lowell to Kaj Klitgaard, a motley crowd fill

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and fulfil the pages of *The Seven Arts*: they gather the strength of self-assurance, in order to turn and rend each other. But for all its catholicity, the cultural aim of this organ is saliently expressed: month by month the rhapsodies of Oppenheim, the surveys of Brooks, the art explorations of Rosenfeld, my literary polemics, the tales of Anderson and of the lamented Frederick Booth, the profound political parables of Bourne converge into a national programme after Whitman, by which America shall become a creative focus in the modern world.

Bourne has left *The New Republic* and denied John Dewey. He espouses a political "impossibilism"—a creative Refusal not dissimilar to the ideal nihilism of nineteenth century Russia. He calls for a proletarian aristocracy, hostile not alone to Croly and Lippmann, who are bound by old institutions, but to Eastman as well, since he has blindly espoused in Marxism an institutional form without relation to the native American substance which must first be created within it. Under such auspices, *The Seven Arts* seems ready to act. For the first time, the æsthetic and the national (so diffuse in Emerson) are joined dynamically in American literary action. The organ's disappearance after one year is not due to the War, as is commonly supposed, but to the war between the individuals of the group—to their mutual distrusts and spiritual failures.

Contemporaneous is *The Soil*, edited by Robert Coady (1916-17). Its romantic mood is complementary to that of *The Seven Arts*. Instead of recreating the past and revaluating the elements of our intellectual life, Coady (inspired without doubt by the futurists of Europe) sings the immediate American fact: the machine, the skyscraper. This animistic cult of our primitive American

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fauna is, in a few years, to be carried on at a higher level by the writers of *Secession*: Gorham B. Munson, E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane, Malcolm Cowley, Kenneth Burke, etc.

4. "*The Middle of the Octave*"

Ten years have passed since Croly published his book. The most positive values of that work are being submerged in *The New Republic's* devotion to the mechanics of an impossible liberal programme, which thinks it can swallow the War that is swallowing it. *The Masses* is dead, betrayed by the kiss of Woodrow Wilson. Bourne is dead. Jack Reed is lost to America and will soon die, a martyr, in Moscow. *The Soil* is dead, and *The Seven Arts*: its momentary army scattered more in spirit even than in flesh. My "Our America" (1919) is an integration of the critical work of these years, projected by the vision of an artist who was moved to create a world in which he could go on living. Critically, the work stems from Whitman and Brooks: it begins also with the attempt to form a usable past and from the analysis of background to distil an energy for the future. Dynamically, it is a drama and a call. The men who had begun to work with one another in *The Seven Arts* have fallen apart. Can they be brought together more creatively than before by this picture of a spiritual Battle, in which they are portrayed as captains? Another motive element in the book is Europe. My friends in France . . . here on political missions . . . engaged me to paint the America not represented in the "Lafayette, we are here!" of General Pershing. So the book was to be both an objective portrait of America, for abroad; and a dynamic prophecy of America, for home.

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Its career was ironically different from what its author proposed. In Europe and South America, it has been particularly valued as evidence and earnest of a prophetic America to offset the forebodings caused by the American Fact. At home, save for the minority who hailed it, it was vigorously attacked as a purely objective, factual picture. Its dimension of creative purpose was ignored and all its lines distorted. The group to which it pathetically called did not respond. The enemies of such a potential group responded with hatred.

5. The Reaction

"Creation," this book had concluded, "in a dying world is revolution." The critical effort, in ten years, had gone far towards a beginning. It had begun to reconstruct our past, to make it usable. It had analysed the abyss between American facts and American aspirations. It had attempted, ideally, to fuse our values—historical, cultural, political, economic, æsthetic—in order to point them forward to articulation in projected social forms, and to experience in an American art. But the labour remained theoretic and diffuse. It had failed to achieve an actual juncture between our facts and our dreams. It rested at the verbal level, winning its satisfactions from intellectual play. It devised no method for work, on persons or on groups. Therefore, creating no inner revolution, it failed to create.

What it did, above all, was to spread American discontent, to make it popular and conscious. But the energy of discontent, when it is bereft of channels and forms for *action*, falls to reaction. It was logical, therefore, that in 1919 (the year of "Our America") Mencken should issue the first volume of his "Prejudices."

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The critics whom I have mentioned, and all their brothers, had willed to create. If they broke down conventions of American life, it was in order to reform it. The negative in their labour was most persuasive, since their constructions were grounded on no rock. Now Mencken proceeds to exploit this new vogue of American negation. Mencken does not build and does not hope. What he accepts is not America but American failure. He justifies and rationalises the impotence of the constructive American critics. And the imperfection of their work is the cause of his. A school of critics rise to bring energy, not to American faith or American will, but to American despair. Too impotent to embrace the body of our world, they thump it.

The success of the Reaction is soon great. In 1920, Albert Jay Nock starts *The Freeman* on its four years' service to elegant sterility. Nock is a single-taxer and a historian of value. But æsthetically, emotionally, spiritually, he yearns back. He writes charming editorials urging the American writer to emulate Addison and Steele. His mood is a refusal of effort—a justifying of a sweet return to a decorous past. Brooks, alas! joins him. He is flinching from the way of which he was the intellectual leader. "The Ordeal of Mark Twain" reveals the defeatist note. His distortions of portraiture no longer have the dynamic end of recreating our literary figures into forces for an American ethos: more and more, they become rationales of failure. With "The Pilgrimage of Henry James" a petulant delight in pain comes into his writings. The still later study of Emerson is a mere sentimental retrospect.

The Reaction accelerates downward. In 1921, Harold Stearns rounds up thirty intellectuals for a barbecue of

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American life. His symposium, called "Civilisation in the United States," reveals how much more appealing it is to accept a superior despair absolving from all effort, than to face a hope which challenges creation. Stearns thereafter takes ship to Paris (or rather to the café du Dôme, accidentally situate in that too hospitable city). And still the vogue broadens. The novel, under its spell, becomes a "bill of particulars of American disgusts." The genius of Sinclair Lewis, author of "Main Street" and "Babbitt," validates this masochistic process of lambasting America's sore spots, the while unconsciously delighting in America's Power. *The Mercury* gives Mencken his vatican. High literary skill is employed to deodorise the death of the American world, so that fastidious youth may rest in it, without the labour of hope, and without discomfort.

6. *Recovery*

In 1924, Irving Babbitt publishes "Democracy and Leadership." It is an heroic attempt to recover a critical American programme by following the lines of our classic heritage; and to apply this programme to public life within Burkean forms of authority and service. Its values and miscalculations we have considered. This radical effort is called conservative with justice, since its premises are the continuation of human values in their historic form—the denial of the need of their transubstantiation. But the old liberalism does not die. Oswald Garrison Villard, who strove desperately to sustain it, as successor to Godwin and Bryant on the *New York Evening Post*, retrenches after the War, and withdraws his lines to the less extended field of *The Nation*. No positive light, however, shines in his liberal sanctum: there is

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too deep an emotional refusal to accept the chaos from which new forms emerge. The best that *The Nation* does (it is not little) is faithfully to gather news in a world of lying journals, and to be receptive. If, ironically, it has been too largely hospitable to the very forces of chaos which liberalism fears: to the invading spirit, that is, of Mencken and Lewis and to the smart despairs of the lesser figures in the Reaction, perhaps the fault is with us.

An atmosphere of intelligent receptivity and of scrupulous expectation marks the liberal Recovery. The fine frenzy of 1917 is gone. It has been replaced by a thirst for discipline, sceptical and exacting: the closest need, surely, after the accolade of birth, for an organic growing. This spirit is in our universities. Alexander Meiklejohn at Wisconsin, Robert Morss Lovett at Chicago, Alvin Johnson with his New School for Social Research, Vernon Louis Parrington at Washington, whose "Main Currents of American Thought" is an epochal work, and such younger critics as Baker Brownell and Joseph Warren Beach are high instances of men in the academic world whose understanding of our past ripens into hospitality, into the shrewd furthering of the forces of our future. The presence of editors like Professors Henry Seidel Canby and Carl Van Doren in the seats of conventional literary power is also a good omen.

7. *Discovery*

Meantime against the tide, still running strong, of the Reaction the young men set their bodies. Brooks (whose career is clouded in a transition from which he may emerge possibly stronger than before) has a continuator. Lewis Mumford has great advantages over the men, as

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they were then, who led *The Seven Arts*. He is a better and more rounded scholar, being versed in metaphysics and the social sciences and arts. He is far more able than was Brooks to enter the young world of our creators; and there is more of that world to shape and guide him than in those nebulous days. At times, Mumford has revealed a tendency, after the late Brooksonian manner, to be acceptingly romantic about our past and begrudgingly realistic only about our present. In "The Golden Day," 1926, he takes crepuscular notes for an aubade. But there is in him also (beginning with "Sticks and Stones") the will to welcome the new birth and the full equipment to share it. He carries criticism, again, into the field of creation.

In 1925, the poet William Carlos Williams publishes "In the American Grain," a work that still awaits the honour its deserves. Williams is trying to forge a new æsthetic image of our past. He is more ambitious than Brooks; having profited by the release from the old images, he undertakes the making of new ones. The twice-told tales of Columbus, Pocahontas, Washington, Burr, Boone, etc., become figures that express the poet's American vision. Williams is an anarchist; his life has been a recoil from hostilities. A defensive atomism makes him refuse to define the values by which he paints his portraits. In consequence they are done in an idiom not negotiable to many; they express an experience whose implicit occultism is a denial of their æsthetic purpose. (For art can never be atomic, being a union of atoms.) In this, Williams is a victim rather than a victor of our chaos. His work will be carried on by others, in broader terms. His importance as a discoverer will then be understood.

Men younger than Williams yet close to him in spirit

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come back, from post-War Europe, with *Dada* in their heads. The synthesis in their Parisian friends (Louis Aragon, André Breton, Philippe Soupault) of a profound traditional discipline, intellectual and æsthetic, with spiritual revolt, has broken up in them to a mere ferment of conflicts. Some try to be pure æsthetes, some pure mystics. What form they may attain from their chaos it is too soon to tell; but they are the best cultural material we possess. Gorham B. Munson, who was the founder of their magazine *Secession*, has of them all gone farthest in stating their common problem. He seeks a religious norm (where Williams is satisfied with his individual æsthetic image) . . . a method for living whole, in order to transfigure the American chaos within him. In Munson's studies of individual authors, he evinces a keen understanding of motive and texture. He is a critic of high order. But this activity does not fulfil him. Having responded to his æsthetic material as objective experience, he desires to recreate it by means of values and for the furtherance of values not cogent in our world—values not yet formed in him. From the sure literary critic, he turns into the groper. (See "Destinations," 1928.) Croly has not yet given us the sequel to the book which twenty years ago opened a critical era. It will be the development of his last chapter: individualism made socially constructive. His articles in *The New Republic* and the new vistas of that organ make clear the direction of his growth.

Such men as these, whom I have perhaps too arbitrarily selected (since I know them and since their work seems archetypical, to me, of others), make clear that a dynamic force gains ground for the transition upward—against the backward pull—at this "middle of the octave." It is

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a force that gathers at all points of American experience, personal, social, æsthetic; that makes this experience vital and directs it. The integration of 1909–1919 again proceeds. The forces of Reaction—1919–1929—(the era of Mencken) give signs of slacking. We must know these years, in their form soured and gilded and disguised by cleverness, as a relapse into the old era of Instinct. They mark a period of sleep for the critical spirit of America, in which it may possibly have relaxed for a new effort.

APPENDIX B: CONCERNING THE AMERICAN WOMAN

Many of the communications called forth by the chapters of my book as they appeared in *The New Republic* revealed the reluctance of the American mind to go from the particular to the general, and the readiness of most Americans to get emotional about ideas vaguely associated with traditional attachments. There were numerous exceptions, of which one follows. The woman who wrote this letter reserves her name for manifest reasons:

I read with avidity the chapter on Women in *The New Republic*: surely one of the most important on the subject in recent times. No one, perhaps, can feel more poignantly the effect of the denaturing of women turned loose in the American Jungle than an "old-fashioned" sheltered woman of intelligence. She is so despised by her emancipated sisters, on the one hand; and she is so bored, if she is extra intelligent, by the rest of her sheltered sisters, on the other, that she finds herself, perhaps well fitted for feminine friendship, almost isolated, and turns to men exclusively for friendship. And in the American Jungle, where all values are being stood upon their heads, the extra intelligent man gives the richest sort of friendship to women: a thing never before believed in, as far as I know, in the world's history.

With the majority of self-supporting women there is an acrid, aggressive, will-to-power more narrow, more specific, and more disagreeable than in men; a sterile rasping on the importance of her external power-life that obliterates all the fineness of perception, all her delicacy of sympathy. So much must she kill in herself to enable her to be as hard-boiled in practical competition as her men rivals, that she turns herself inside out so as to dry up her vital organs of

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comprehension. And she glories in her triumph over her sister-in-chains, the "parasite" who has the leisure to be a mother and, possibly, an artist.

As I myself am not an economically independent woman, perhaps I can say with greater force, having suffered the contumely outlined above, what I believe about this transitional period of woman. The fact that the American woman has had to "go outside herself to be like her man"—the fact that she has had "to win from herself what she has always gotten from the man she has lost" (to quote from your article)—these facts, in my opinion, have done more than to give her, in your words, "self-fulfilment—the fallacy of Power."

She has gained, and has transmitted to us more old-fashioned women, certain attitudes of irreplaceable value. They may all come under the rather vague term: *a sense of sportsmanship*. Perhaps a sense of sportsmanship is a beginning of your sense of the Whole? Freed from the old narrow working for the advantage of one home, one man, one family, she has to form for herself a more impersonal attitude towards other people outside the home. She has no time for the old fault of women, quick judgment of conduct outside her own experience, and usually condemnatory judgment. She has to admit the necessity for intelligence, even if merely as a *survival* weapon; and, further, the necessity for approximate truth in thought and action.

This growth in American women can be seen best in contrast with Continental women. I have had an unusual chance to compare them; I always had French women as caretakers when I was a child; and as a precocious lonely child I estimated their very essence as only a clever child can do. No one of my many nurses had anything but the instinct either to suppress or to exploit me. They were without exception absolutely self-seeking, with none of the modern feeling for the child. He was weak, and *therefore* to be exploited! (This does not apply to British, Russian, or Ital-

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ian or Spanish; only to French, Belgian, Swiss and Germans. Of the first four I know very little.)

After I grew up, I had a queer nostalgia for the French language, which I spoke exclusively up to eight years of age. So I sought out French friends. After half a dozen intensive experiences, I have at the age of forty finally given them up. They, each one, attracted me because of their superior cultivation. They were all unusually well educated. One was the daughter of a head of the University of Paris; she had taken degrees in philosophy. Three were rarely talented in literature. All were more or less "on their own," which affected them very differently from the way it affects my American friends. It gave them no sense of superiority over me. They all admitted my unique congeniality as a friend. There was never any real reason for friction between myself and these friends; nothing to alienate save the very reactionary femaleness in them which differentiates them so strikingly from the "modern" American.

They had no sense of sportsmanship whatsoever. Every move they made, in regard to me or anybody else, was dictated solely by motives that led to the satisfaction of their own advantage, personal and immediate. They were graspingly selfish in comparison to "us" (I am now grouping American women, free or bond, together); their selfishness was not even hidden, it was amusingly patent; I did not mind it as it amused me and as it happened that I was not drawn into any serious difficulty by it. These women were all liars, artistic ones. This also interested me, as I have no ethical objection to lies; their value depends entirely on the intricate context. But I got bored, for *ideas* interested them not at all; "truth" as such was a matter of complete indifference. The young woman with degrees of philosophy marvelled at my interest in French criticism, and balked when I wanted her to read it with me; she preferred bad sex novels and writing sentimental pseudo-oriental poetry herself, to read to me. In each case I made special efforts to adjust

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myself to each woman because of my initial admiration or her æstheticism, which I found only skin-deep.

They had of course no real sympathy at all. These, these, I thought to myself, are what all women were (except the exceptions!) before the industrial revolution!

So at last I came to see that my American friends, even those hampered and half destroyed by extraverted hard living, were superior as beings made for social contact, for the simple reason that they believed in the value *per se* of human contact as apart from mere *sex* contact. There was many times more sheer altruism, more sense of reverence for human life, more balance and more health in the poorest of my American friends than in the richest, humanly, of the Continentals. These last were eaten up by their exaggerated sense of personal gain, and by their exaggerated sexuality as a "thing in itself." It seemed abnormal to me, as overshadowing completely any real interest. Were women in the old days like this? It is possible. This bored me, as an adolescent obsessed with sex would bore me. But no—these women had none of the illusions, none of the glamorous feeling of mystery, an aura sanctifying his obsession, of the adolescent. They were duller than a dull American man with a power-complex. Because he externalises his need of power, because he gets it away from himself, because he pushes the active force into other channels, he seems healthier to me than his counterpart, the woman who subjects herself to sensory life, to the will-to-vanity which is the passive counterpart to man's will-to-power. This fixation in personal vanity corroded and limited these women, for, passive as it was, it never gave stimulus to their other faculties.

It would be the exceptional Continental woman whom I could trust with one day of my child—whose word I could depend upon—although I feel she is simply the victim of the break-up of old values, and has not the activity of our own masculinised girls. And it would be the exceptional American woman whom I could *not* trust!

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English women seem to combine our new sense of fairness and our self-respect with a lack of our harshness and aggressiveness as if they had carried over from traditional values certain mellowing factors.

It may be said that one cannot generalise from a dozen experiences. The contrast is so striking, however, as to be irrefutably a proof to me that the American woman has gained an enormous spiritual emancipation from her ordeal of difficult pioneering in the jungle. If there is truth in what you say, that "the first step in the creation of a Whole from our American chaos will be the union of man" with her, he will find real union only because of the ancient effort he has so long made alone, to exceed himself, to transcend his narrow ego, which she has copied. It is as if during the first period man and woman separated and were lost in your Jungle; and as if, once more reunited, they were to find values developed by their very agony of isolation.

APPENDIX C: CONCERNING THE MACHINE

(A COMMUNICATION)

1. *The Monster*

In late classic times, when a god had to be brought upon the stage, he was floated down from above by a "machine." Nowadays, instead of a god who emerges into our drama, to settle our entanglements, what is it that comes forth from the machine?

In his *Re-discovery*, Waldo Frank gives to the machine two rôles: one, that of a possible extension of the tool, a possible instrument towards the "spiritual" life; the other, that of a destructive and autonomous monster.

He expanded the idea of this first rôle at greater length in an essay, "The Machine and Metaphysics," published in 1927 in *The New Republic*. There, he says: "In the machine are adumbrated the will of the inventor, the will of the owner, the will of many workers, the will, indeed, of an age and of a world. Only when the individual worker experiences that these wills are not alien to him; that these elements of life contained in the machine fuse, in a higher synthesis, together with his own, into a unitary act—alone then will his spirit in participation be able to go out through the machine, so that it and the whole mechanised world may once again, in his joy, in his beauty, in his human pride, express him." However, the writer immediately postpones this period of concord to an indefinitely remote future by adding: "But such a mechanic would possess the consciousness of a Spinoza? No less! No less is needed, in order that the human world may not go down before this new Nature—the free-spawning mechanical invention."

This "free-spawning" creature, as he sees it in the present, is described most succinctly in the third chapter of the *Re-discovery*, "Action as Decay." "Modern science had to

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bring a monster in our midst, an anarchic mindless monster in place of God, to trammel us and rule us." This reminds me of an autobiography which describes the terror of a child wandering from his parents at a railroad station; as the monster train roared at him, he was sure that here was "God rushing from Heaven to slay me for having disobeyed my mother, and gone so close to the track." Thereafter he was doomed to terror of the Locomotive God. In somewhat the same way, in reading Waldo Frank's indictment of the machine, we picture people standing on slow coaches, suddenly tipped over backward by the frenetic forward jerk of the demon motors attaching themselves to the old vehicles; people tipped over and now gazing vacantly at an empty sky they do not understand.

Now, elsewhere, he has described the machine as action particularised into a body. As to his position on the Western ethos of action, see again Chapter III, in which he traces the backward pull of the tide towards the defeat of action in the East, and the static view of action in Greece. Later, in mediæval times, action, he says, was again debased. "The values of Catholic Europe became contemplation, otherworldly knowledge, an inert vigil for the Lord." Thus far, he is apparently writing in defense of action. "A dimension has been added, not yet to knowledge, but to living; the dimension of human will as a creator. And the way of this creator is action." But all through the book he compares the fluctuating chaos of our times with the static hierarchised Middle Ages to the disadvantage of modern life. Thus it seems to me he wishes to have the thing both ways; to wish that we should move, or seem to move, in our new dimension whose way is action, and yet have the advantages of a thoroughly dogmatised and motionless world.

In the Middle Ages man was a definitely imperfect being, irreparably corrupted by Original Sin. Between the human world and the divine was a discontinuity so important and so unbridgeable as to be difficult of conception by men satu-

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rated in the various ideas held since the Renaissance: ideas of man innocent, man perfectible. Now if we are to give up the idea of "progress" and still wish to believe in a universe tightly integrated, with no separation between human and divine, it will not be sufficient, of course, to imitate the organisation of the mediæval world. The effort towards a new metaphysic is so discouraging to intellectuals that Waldo Frank's prolegomena should be received with profound gratitude, and without that undue criticism which is all too easy.

Uncertain as to what is happening now, he uses the machine for two symbols: one, the instrument of man's development, as a bare possibility; the other, as the embodiment of man's destructive personal will. Now there are symbols so ancient that they have had time to acquire the accretions of ambivalent values: thus, wine might be taken as a symbol of decadent luxury, and also as a symbol of the blood of Christ. But is not the machine too young to have the dignity for such a double significance, without there resulting a confusion of thought?

2. The Machine and Personal Will

The Old Testament Prophets, in whose spirit he often writes, were dualists, which Waldo Frank says he is not. But in order to have a sense of the whole, must he not accept the whole, and accept it as it is, as a manifestation of Necessity; must he not accept the present technicalised world as the body, and the collective will as the soul, and body and soul as two aspects of reality, without proroguing so remotely the goal of the equilibration of action and contemplation? I wish that he had stressed harder the inevitability (which he must ratify as a monist) of the present, with all its cults of Power; that inevitability invoked by Leonardo:

"O marvelous Necessity, thou with supreme reason constrainest all effects to issue from their causes in the briefest possible way."

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The briefest possible way is not brief enough for Waldo Frank's impatient, eager spirit, dissatisfied with the speed, furious as it is, with which the world is being transformed; with which decay is being transmuted to new organism.

In the last paragraph of the chapter, "Action as Knowing,"¹ he says: "Let the intellectual learn from woman. Suppose he went into her kitchen and proved to her the unreality of her pots and pans . . . she would laugh at him. For she has never taken her pots and pans as independent entities at all!" The accepters of the present world might say to him, paraphrasing his own words: "Our machines (where he has 'our conceptual truths') are pots and pans. We have never taken them as independent entities at all! We use them; the real is the relation between them and us. With us, they are part of an event that gives a dinner to idealist and realist alike. . . . They are true in a true action. They are themselves a kind of action, which we must know by putting them into relation with all other actions. *In other words, the dualism underlying all previous ideas about knowledge and action must go. They make for the defeat of wholeness: for the defeat of health.*"

I believe that in the words italicised lies the crux of Waldo Frank's difficulty. He does not accept the action of the machine as a kind of knowledge, for in the first chapter he has the statement: "A dimension has been added, *not yet* to knowledge but to living, the dimension of human will as a creator." And yet he says that all previous ideas about action *must go*.

The question of action, now social, now anti-social, which is confusing in the machine, applies as well to the woman in the kitchen with her pots and pans: she uses them and has used them from the beginning, sometimes for social purposes, sometimes for the enforcement of her own anti-social will,

¹This chapter, which appeared in *The New Republic*, has been incorporated here in Chapter XVIII; and the quoted paragraph has been omitted.—*W. F.*

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when she is dominated by them as man is sometimes dominated by the machine. But is not the machine, in fact, already a federative means of removing from the anti-social woman her means of tyranny?

Even though we put aside the question of determinism, and accept for the moment the freedom of the will, I do not see how it can be shown that the machine is exclusively the embodiment, as Waldo Frank has it, of the personal will. The workers in factories make precisely the opposite objection to the machine: that it does not represent them, that it represents the domination of groups in power. Then to come down to the individual man, owning a radio: he is becoming passive, and is turning over his spontaneous will to make music to others, and must listen to what he gets, regardless of choice. But the chief example of the kind of machine that incorporates the extraverted will-to-power derogated by Waldo Frank, is the private automobile. "Multiply the car," he says, "by twenty million, and all you get is a multiplication of fractional embodiments of personal wills." But the automobile, that most nearly personal of machines, must travel routes laid out by the communal will, at a rate of speed prescribed by the community, instead of going cross-country like the horse. Is it, therefore, not much less the expression of self-will than, in the past, the million million horses lashed on errands surely not always altruistic? The billion horses and oxen, before the invention of the tractor, pulling heavy ploughs all day against galled shoulders, dragging loads of goods to and fro in a difficult world, those animals were dumb while they still lived, and are forgotten. The modern sentiment, or sentimentality, as you choose to see it, about the abuse of animals is no doubt a transferred protest against human drudgery—slavery, of which the working brute was a reminder. It is hard to believe that the abuse of selfish volition has increased when we remember the anti-social instincts that drove men to duelling, to the formation of

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marauding clans for brigandry and piracy, and to the capture of slaves for all labour.

Thus we are brought back again and again to the question of human slavery, against which the machine was directed. If one believes the modern industrial "slave" to be a slave in the old sense, one has not really become imaginatively aware of the conditions of the lower classes in older times, the worst features of which were ignored and covered up by the masters, professedly Christian, so that there is no record. But to get back to the point, Waldo Frank is right in feeling that personal will, on the loose, is what would make robots of us all; from this I conclude he does not really believe in the autonomy of the individual will. The machine, I repeat, seems to me more often an expression of the collective will, and in that lies its essential difference from the tool.

3. The Machine as Unifier

The doctrine of the Church, cloaked in the mystery of Latin as a means of communication, was a unifying power spread over Western Europe by the militant priest. At the beginning of its promulgation, was it never used as "an anarchic function of some particular act of some particular will"—the complaint made by Waldo Frank of the machine? Surely it was, and terribly.

That slow and ponderous communication established by a common language, Latin, taught at the sword's point, which, being first established, DREW OUT LATER a common faith, is so exceeded by our great, complex instrument of communication which has grown from the machine, that its stupendous potentiality, its very grandeur, prevents us from rightly seeing what it means. The instinct of the people, greedy for these new manifestations, passionate about radio and airplane, is preparing the foundation for a unity far more profound than the faith of the Gaul, taught to believe in working for his own soul's salvation. Which is the

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more socialised being; which the man with a dawning Sense of the Whole: the Gaul, kneeling in inarticulate fear before a priest, discovering himself to be a despicable culprit, tainted with original sin, taught that the more wretched his abasement the holier he was; or, on the other hand, an office-bound clerk of to-day leaning from a sixteenth storey window, with innocent tears in his eyes, cheering a Lindbergh with a vague vision of a future when space and time will be fully overcome, a future which yet *promises him nothing for himself*? Is the modern man really so stupid, so childish, so empty, to be swept by the crowd's delight, by what Waldo Frank calls, referring to Lindbergh, "a gesture entirely without adult connotation"?

The movie alone, which tells one people in a universal language about the life of other peoples, however banal its initial stammering language, must in the end draw them closer together than even the mystery which they gathered of yore, in magnificent cathedrals, which pointed them away from the earth and its values, the earth which they were forced temporarily to deny. In a world filled with the stench of gangrened wounds; in a world filled with the stench of sewerage gathering in moats; in a world filled with plague, that plague which eventually was a factor in the loss of belief in a merciful God: no incense could disguise those stenches. No great bells and no calm glory of intoning could drown the cries of brutalised underlings tortured by their masters, lay and clerical. In that dark world the dependence upon another life was necessary as a compensation, as salvation from despair.

In our world, drawing ever more tightly together, the unity of understanding which the new communication predicates, which its scope demands of the future, engages a respect of the intelligence for the spirit of man equal to the old reverence of the emotions for the static Trinity. The telegraph, the telephone, the wireless, the press, the phonograph, the movie and the movietone, the steamboat, the elec-

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tric tram, the automobile, the railroad, the airplane, these are a new, strange litany, asseverating innocence, to the spirit of man, the spirit which has replaced the older gods.

To this upholding of the importance of communication, Waldo Frank answers that it is all senseless if there is nothing of importance to communicate. The question thus reverts to the state of man's psyche. Has it indeed changed so much? Has it indeed nothing to communicate?

The speed of the physical organisation of the world by science, the growth of semi-literateness, of universal "education," of technical inventiveness, has caused a one-sided development of sheer intelligence, dissociated from old cultural and emotional values, that were based on dogma. This growth has bent and overbalanced the tree of life, so that many branches are withered. And as in any multicellular organism, certain functions have been relegated to the lower automatic centres. This has been taken as the indication of the increasing automatism of the human being. Intellect has been branching out at the expense of co-ordination; intellect which has actually gained an almost complete control of the brute forces of Nature, but which has not understood its own proper ends. But, in the man who misses the old culture, the old emotional roots, it has become the fashion to deprecate the intelligence, the inventiveness, the cleverness that has transformed the world.

But already, in the last fifty years, this very cleverness has turned upon itself, and has tried to see the back of its own neck. Not merely the thinker, the philosopher, the scientist, but the man in the street has turned a concentrated attention on psychology; he is already facing the question of his own meaning; he is at last self-conscious *and with his own approval*; and consciousness demands meaning. No sooner are the latest inventions in working order than he loses interest in their mechanism; it becomes self-evident, and he tries to find what they can be used *for*.

From the physical world, the very poles of which are be-

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ing charted, so that no longer is there any unknown territory, any dark surrounding Scythia, any borderland to which mystery and adventure may draw the imagination, the sensitive man turns inward to the mystery within himself. But because of his saturation with new impressions, impressions produced by intelligence, he has not yet been able to establish any affective convictions to replace the old convictions that were traditional. He is like an adolescent in his bewilderment. Faced with new powers, and with the necessity of carrying on the world's work without depending on the will of a Father, some men welcome their maturity, and some dread it. All the reverence he felt for his parents he must now feel for himself, if he is to have enough self-respect to carry on the world. But the adolescent, if ultra-sensitive, is horrified by his responsibility; if coarser, he may be temporarily obsessed by the crude new physical world, as the man with an automobile is sometimes obsessed by its raw motion; as the makers of movietones are obsessed by their sheer noise-making faculties. He cannot understand his new potencies except by adjustment and experience; for he has made no link between the sensory life, so closely connected with the emotions, and the intelligence. There is everywhere this lack of the process described by Ramon Fernandez as a "controlling contraction of the psyche" whereby the impression is *deepened*, and a "sentiment" (which I have translated as an affective conviction) is established to serve as a bridge between the incoming stimulus and the intelligence which controls the response. This is an unavoidable phase of our disequibration; and so we see everywhere, as Waldo Frank points out, men who accept themselves too easily, who care only for comfort and power.

But man has lost his old sense of immediate power; and unless he accepts the organising world, he has no prime motor to replace his own lost pride of faith. Thus to many men life seems devoid of meaning. On the other hand, the

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man who labours for labour's sake, with no hope of reward or immortality; is he, in fact, so diminished in human stature?

The whole question of the relation of the single human soul to society is involved in the difficulty of Waldo Frank's appraisal of modern life. In his brilliant study of power, when he sets personal power, the self imposed on others, over against love, the fusion of the self with others, he seems to draw a somewhat artificial line between the intense personal energy of the genius and the social energy that derives from the very fact of the belief of the genius in his *freedom of will*, or in other words, in his ego. The great leader has in the past somehow incorporated in his own burning vitality the floating collective will; and for this positiveness, he has often been resisted and rejected.

To try to sum up in one question the various difficulties I have raised, I would ask Waldo Frank (who does not believe in the reality of action) if the machinery may not be, after all, a means of proving, in fact, is it not at this moment actually proving to the unmetaphysically minded man this very truth, the truth of the "unreality" of action? Is not the tendency to control time and space, in the telescoping of the world, showing the obviousness of the relativity of time and space? The growth of scepticism in the average man, resulting from the disproportionate development of intellection, is such as to force him to penetrate deeper and deeper into these mysteries, the mysteries of the ultimates once contemplated only by the savant and the philosopher: the questions of reality and meaning. Surely, to take in Nature as a junior partner is to show a confidence in himself that has never been approached! And just as the theories of evolution, at first considered blasphemy against the omnipotence of God, later became a source of additional awe before the majesty of the world order, so, now, far from losing reverence because of his success with mechanics, man may be preparing a new medium, a new

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vehicle in which to chant ancient praises of that Mover to whom, in the end, all motion must be referred.

Though thou wert worshipped by the names divine
Of Jesus and Jehovah, thou art still
The son of man in weary night's decline . . .
The lost traveler's dream under the hill.

—William Blake.

ELVA DE PUE.

Miss de Pue's communication admirably expresses one typical response to my handling of the problem of the machine. It was written from a reading of the serial chapters in *The New Republic*. I feel confident that most of the points raised by Miss de Pue are answered in the book's final form; both by the amplification of my view of the machine and of science, and—even more—by the fact that the reader of the book can unify the various chapters into a better organic comprehension of what my attitude is, than was possible for the reader of articles spread through forty-four weeks in a magazine.

There is little fundamental disagreement between Miss de Pue and this book as regards the machine. But her more positive stress of its potentialities is an amendment I am glad to honour, since I am aware that I have often taken these potentialities for granted, in my eagerness to dwell rather on the urgent debit column.

The difficulty, indeed—and the consequent troubling of many intelligent readers—has been, paradoxically, due to my almost too implicit acceptance of the machine. I recognise it as our inevitable nature (Chapters I, III, VI). To praise the machine (Chapters III, VII) impressed me as animistic; to inveigh against it as absurd. *Here the machine is*, as surely as was the forest of the savage: to

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be transfigured by us, as was the forest transformed by him. The question is so cryingly: what may it do to us, what might we do with it? that I have not thought it necessary to stress my implicit acceptance. And this, perhaps, has been misleading.

Although I shall not take up this communication point by point, I wish to note one or two places where I do not feel that Miss de Pue has quite correlated the statements of the book into a just understanding.

She writes: "All through the book he compares the fluctuating chaos of our times with the static hierarchised Middle Ages to the disadvantage of modern life." This surely is not true, save in so far as I compare a process with a consummation. In view of my judgments of the static, the dogmatic, the "nown fallacies" of the Middle Ages (Chapters II, III, XVIII), it is certainly clear that I am no gothicist in disguise. Have I not made plain my faith in the unprecedented potential splendour of our new Atlantic world?

Again, Miss de Pue writes: "I wish he had stressed harder the inevitability (which he must ratify as a monist) of the present." I fear that there lurks in this wish a false understanding of Necessity and of my concept of the Whole. In Chapters II, XVIII, XX I have made it perfectly clear that the Whole and God are, for me, dynamic conceptions: man must act in order to realise them. Nothing could be farther from my sense of Necessity and of the Whole than the fatalistic acceptance of the quietist. But surely this is all too plain in the text to demand re-statement.

Nor has Miss de Pue quite grasped what I have explained in "The Reign of Power"; else she could not see a contradiction in my statement that the machine is an

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expression of the personal will and yet enslaves the man. "The machine," she writes, "seems to me more an expression of the collective will, and in that lies its essential difference from the tool." There is here a deep confusion. Trigant Borrow, in "The Social Basis of Consciousness," has, better than any one else of whom I know, shown that the collective will may consist of a mere accumulation of personal wills: that it may be the same thing, *in extenso*. And I have demonstrated that a collective will, in a herd, is not necessarily an expression of the whole, at all. On the other hand, one man with the sense of the whole will express the whole. Such a man with a tool will express the whole. But a mob with the machine will express merely the destructive, unsocial personal egoism of its several members. The distinction between the true sense of the Whole, which must be personal ere it can adumbrate in the group, and the false absolutistic will which may well be "collective," is crucial to the understanding of this book.

But when Miss de Pue writes, ". . . man has lost his old sense of immediate power; and unless he accepts the organising world he has no prime motor to replace his own lost pride of faith," I can only thank her for putting in fine clear words what I have said less well. It is precisely because I do accept, as a premise, this organising world, this industrially organised world, that I have proceeded in my book to the study of how the *creative spirit of man* must and may capture control of this world, and employ it as the function of itself.

The other extreme response to my treatment of the machine and of science has also not been lacking. One well-known critic, in a number of notes sent to me as he read

the series, writes: "Any good sceptic would shake his head over the esteem you show for modern scientists"; and he goes on to upbraid me for my "faith in modern science," which, he says, "may be but the modern superstition."

But of course this is irrelevant to the issues of this book. My province here was neither to dissent from, nor to defend modern science: it was to take science as a fact, *as a dominant fact* in the emotional, intellectual, æsthetic, economic, political, moral and religious formation of our Atlantic world. Science for me is not a dogma, nor a faith, nor the foe of some particular dogma of my own: although the dogmatisms of science and the faith in science *are facts* which I have had to consider. Science and the modern attitude towards science are remaking the dynamic nature of our life; this rôle of science is certain to persevere for a long, long time.

Nor is my esteem for the true men of science (Chapter III) the kind to trouble a true sceptic. Only the man who secretly nurses some dogma of his own which science hinders will dissent from such esteem; and he will be very prone to delude himself with the idea that he is being sceptical of science, in order to hide his devotion to some dogmatic faith which science contradicts.

The reader who recalls what I have said of the relativity of truth; of the actionable nature of knowledge, of the relation of modern science with mediæval theology, will understand my attitude; and will see why I have displeased the extremists of both camps.

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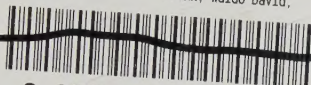
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